

INSTRUCTION  
AND  
DILIGENCE  
THE  
TRUE WAY  
TO THE  
KNOWLEDGE  
OF THE  
*HOLY SCRIPTURES,*  
WHICH  
Maketh wise unto Salvation,  
ILLUSTRATED.

---

By THOMAS MASTERS.

---

Prov. xxii. 6. *Train up a Child in the Way  
he should go, and when he is old, he will  
not depart from it.*

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. FORD, at the Angel in the Poultry,  
near Stocks-Market. 1724. [Price 1 s. 6 d.]

202 A2



a  
c  
i  
g  
l  
A  
a  
C  
m





TO  
My DEAR FRIENDS in  
*Rotherhitb.*

BELOVED,



THE following Discourses which once you heard from the Pulpit, I have revised, enlarged, and done my Endeavour to adapt them to the ordinary Capacities, both of Parents and Children; with a Design (if God shall vouchsafe his Blessing) to render them useful in our Families, and to animate us with Vigour, in the Pursuit of that excellent Knowledge, which is the Glory of our Religion, the Admiration of Angels, the Envy of Devils, and the Delight and Happiness of all sincere Christians. I heartily wish this Publication may make some little Amends for my defective

*Visitations, which I mightily lament, but cannot help ; and which, indeed, you have the Goodness to bear with, and excuse, upon the Account of my great Infirmary. May our good God, in Compassion to me, and Love to you, make up the Defect of one Sense (in his poor Servant) with a double Portion of his Holy Spirit ; that the Work of Grace may meet with no Interruption on his Part, nor any just Cause of Complaint on yours ; but may flourish with us, to our mutual Comfort and Satisfaction. That Jesus Christ may be truly honoured, and sincerely adored by us. That his Kingdom and Interest may thrive with us, and his revealed Will be in the highest Reputation among us. And as no Work is more acceptable to God, and beneficial to our selves, and our dear Children than this, so by none is it more ardently desired, than by*

*Your Affectionate Minister,*

T. M.



OF THE  
KNOWLEDGE  
OF THE  
SCRIPTURE.

2 TIM. iii. 15.

*And that from a Child thou hast known  
the Holy Scriptures, which are able to  
make thee wise unto Salvation, through  
Faith which is in Jesus Christ.*



F all Sorts of Knowledge that is  
the best, and the most worthy of  
our Pains and Search, which  
tends most to perfect our Beings  
and Nature, and to promote our  
great and ultimate End, the  
Glory of God, and our final Happiness : And  
this is the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

B

For

## 2 Of Knowing the Scripture.

For the Acquirement of this excellent and useful Knowledge, *Timothy* early enters a Disciple or Scholar ; and by Love towards it, and Study and Diligence about 'it, he became a great Proficient in it, he arrived to the true and saving Knowledge of the Scriptures, to that Knowledge of them which led him to the Belief, the Love, and Practice of them, and prevail'd with him universally to regulate his Conversation by them.

And this too in his youthful Days ; as the Apostle observes in the Text, to his Praise and Commendation. *From a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Jesus Christ.* In which Words the Apostle doth tacitly hint, though not openly exprefs, his good and early Education and Instruction ; as well as commend him for his singular Improvement.

For without understanding the Apostle thus, 'tis hard to conceive, without a Miracle of Grace, how *Timothy* should come to engage so early in learning the Holy Scriptures. What but this should direct his Choice, and determine him herein ? His Condition, as a Child, rendered him utterly incapable to judge for himself, and his corrupt Nature and Inclination to chuse and prefer the sacred Writings, to all other Books, more agreeable to his corrupt Gust, and Infant State. To be sure, this is owing to the ordinary Means, to paternal Instruction ; which is a Guide to Youth, and a Preceptor



### Of Knowing the Scripture. 3

ceptor to the unskilful and ignorant, to assist and remedy the Defects of their Understandings.

And according to the Apostle, this very Course God takes with Persons of riper Years, even the Adult, to inform their Minds, and to reform their Hearts and Lives: As when he puts these Questions, *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. x. 14. Which are strong Negatives, and assure us that the ordinary and only practicable Way, as to Men, to become wise, and holy, and good, is the Way of Instruction.

This, undoubtedly, *Timothy* had the Advantage of; for the Apostle takes Notice of his Mother *Eunice*, and his Grandmother *Lois*, as Persons of good Report in the Church of Christ, and remarkable for their unfeigned Faith, and singular Piety, 2 *Tim.* i. 5. And how natural 'tis for pious Parents to give their dear Off-springs early and good Instruction and Discipline, universal Experience can testify.

Godly Parents are an unspeakable Blessing and Benefit to Children; Nature and Grace, Religion and Affection, constrains them to all the Offices of Love and Goodness they are capable of; and induces them chearfully to lay out, and carefully to lay up, all they have for them here, and to be very solicitous for their Happiness hereafter.



#### 4 Of Knowing the Scripture.

Hence 'tis easy to conceive the Apostle's Sense, when he saith, *That from a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures.* Ἀπο Βρέφους, from thine Infancy, as soon as thou wast capable of learning, thou wast instructed in the holy Scriptures, by thy Mother *Eunice*, and Grandmother *Lois*.

Hence we may observe,

*That the sure Way to have our Children become wise unto Salvation, is to instruct them betimes in the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures.*

In treating on these Words I shall speak to these Particulars.

I. Demonstrate that Parental Instruction is a good and sure Way, to make our Children become wise unto Salvation.

II. Consider that this Instruction is a Duty, and incumbent upon Parents.

III. Consider what is required of Children themselves, in Order to attain and reach the Ends of paternal Instruction.

IV. Shall demonstrate the Excellence and Sufficiency of the holy Scriptures, for the Purposes spoken of. And, lastly, apply the Whole.

I. Let us demonstrate that Parents instructing their Children in the holy Scriptures, is a good and sure Way for them to become wise unto Salvation. This we shall do to the Purpose; by seriously considering what Kind of Knowledge that is which denominates Men wise

## *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

5

wise unto Salvation ; and what Books or Writings they be which are most adapted and fitted to attain so great and desirable an End ?

1. Let us consider what Kind of Knowledge that is which denominates Men wise unto Salvation ? This Knowledge in its own Nature is spiritual and sublime ; and in general consists in the Knowledge of our selves and our Sin. And, 2. In the Knowledge of God, and his Almighty Mercy that saves us.

(1.) It consists in the Knowledge of our selves, of our Sin, and Fall, and the universal Pravity and Corruption of Heart and Nature that ensued, together with the dreadful Calamities Mankind are involved in for the same ; and which (of themselves) they can neither prevent nor escape. (2.) It consists in the Knowledge of God ; in what he is in himself, in his Attributes, and the Perfections of his Nature and Being : That he is independent, self-subsistent, eternal, invisable, incomprehensible, and immortal ; infinite in Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, and Truth. That all Things were made by him and for him, and are under the Care and Government of his Providence continually. That in him we live, and move, and have our Beings ; and from him every good Gift, and every perfect Gift doth come. That his Will is the Rule of our Faith and Duty ; and that his Almighty Mercy, Love, and Goodness, &c. in and by his beloved Son Jesus Christ, doth save us from our Sins, and from the just and sad Consequences

## 6      *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

ces of them ; and procures Redemption and Salvation for all penitent Believers, from one End of the World even unto the other.

This Kind of Knowledge it is, that hath the Preference of, and is infinitely more valuable, than any other Sort of Knowledge whatsoever, as it is adapted unto, and by its spiritual Nature and Tendency, serves to make us wise unto Salvation. Every one, therefore, that is well versed in, that is skilful and well acquainted with this Knowledge, I mean, that is savingly enlightened in these Doctrines, he is certainly wise unto Salvation.

2. What Books or Writings they be which contain this excellent Knowledge, which is of such Moment and Advantage both to us and our Children ; and which we must have Recourse unto, and diligently consult, for the Purposes spoken of ?

They are the sacred Writings of the Prophets and Apostles, or the Holy Bible, the only Book of Life in the World, which incomparably exceeds all other Books, in the Excellency of the Matter it contains, the Majesty of its Style, the Sublimity, Spirituality, Verity, and Purity of its Doctrine and Precepts, the Preciousness of its Promises, and the infallible Certainty of their Performance. On this divine Book, we may with Confidence and Comfort rely, as on our sure and unerring Guide to Heaven and Glory ; as the Rule of our Faith, and our Lives, and what is every Way sufficient to make both us and our Children wise unto Salvation.

Now

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 7

Now as that Knowledge which denominates Men wise unto Salvation, is in its own Nature spiritual and divine, and is no where to be found or learned but in the Bible, then it follows, That when Parents instruct their Children in the holy Scriptures, they take a sure Course to make them wise unto Salvation. For as the Study and Knowledge of the Laws of the Land are a sure Way to become able Counsellors ; and the Knowledge of the medicinal Science, to be able Physicians ; so the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures, to become good Christians, and wise unto Salvation.

Books of all Faculties contain in them, and treat of those Matters which peculiarly tend to the Improvement of Men in their respective Professions. And in Proportion to their Diligence and Care about them, such commonly is their Improvement by them. The holy Scriptures are singularly adapted, and every Way suited to the Purposes of Light and Grace, of Knowledge and Holiness ; or according to the Apostle in the Text, *are able to make us wise unto Salvation*. When therefore we seriously devote our selves to the Study and Practice of them, and carefully and diligently instruct our Children in the Knowledge of them, we are in a good Way to attain our End ; and take the best Method to become wise unto Salvation. But so much for the first Particular.

II. That



## 8      *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

II. That this Instruction is a Duty, and incumbent upon Parents. Bare Nature and Affection prompts Parents to do all good Things for their Children, and to avert all evil Things from them. Children are in the nearest Relation to Parents ; they are Flesh of their Flesh, and Bone of their Bone ; they came from their Loins, and are born from the Belly ; and as they are nearer in Blood, so in all Reason are they dearer (than others) in their Affections. 'Tis no Wonder, therefore, that the Welfare and Happiness of such precious Branches of themselves, should be upon the same Foot, and equally regarded with their own ; and that they should cheerfully do all they can to interest them in it, and to secure and prepare them for it. And if bare Nature and Affection will lead and prompt Men, thus to love and serve their Children : How much more will they do so, when the divine Precept is joyned with it ? Such a singular Regard hath God for Children, and of such precious Account are they in his Eyes, that he omits nothing that is conducive for their Welfare and Happiness : His own Providence shews that he is not unmindful of them ; and his Word declares, that their own Parents shall not neglect them. God will not suffer them to want either Preservation or Instruction ; the former he undertakes himself; the latter is the Province of their Parents, and he holds them to the strict and faithful Performance thereof ; saying, *These Words which I command thee this Day, shall be in thine Heart ;*



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 9

*Heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine House, and when thou walkest by the Way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, Deut. vi. 6, 7.* Behold the Care and Kindness of God to Little Children: They are ignorant of Letters, they know nothing of God, of his Ways and Worship; they cannot instruct themselves, their tender Parents shall do it. In their Infant State they are only capable of Learning; but O the Goodness of God to them! To prevent the Infusion of corrupt Principles from bad Teachers, he himself provides them Masters of his own chusing; faithful, loving Parents, whose Happiness is jointly interwoven with their own, and whose Bowels will awaken in them a due Concern to do them all the Good they possibly can. And that those Guides of their Youth might neither err themselves, nor mislead their Scholars, in the important Matters of eternal Life, infinite Wisdom hath given them an infallible Rule for their Directory: *Those Words which I command thee this Day, shall be in thine Heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children, &c.* And if Parents consider the Circumstance of Time specified, and particularly pointed at in the Text, in which they must enter upon, and engage in this Duty, 'twill encourage them to set about it with Vigour and Resolution; and that upon this Account, Because it presents them with a beautiful Prospect of Success, and

C

seems

## 10 Of Knowing the Scripture.

seems to assure them, *that their Labour shall not be in vain.* The Time Parents are to begin and enter upon the Work of Instruction, is in Childhood : As soon as their Children are capable to learn, they should diligently teach them, and take all Opportunities to inculcate those plain, easy, and necessary Lessons upon them, which are suitable to their Age and Capacities ; and which 'tis the Will and good Pleasure of the infinitely wise and holy God, they should know and understand.

This youthful Season is the best and most promising of all Seasons, for Parents to enter upon so great and good a Work, a Work of the greatest Moment and Consequence both to themselves and to their Children : For, ordinarily speaking, their present Comfort and future Happiness, in a great Measure depends upon it. I say, This is the best Season ; for now Children are tender, obsequious, and dutiful ; now they are easily perswaded to hear, to learn, and to obey. Now a good Word will have more Influence upon them to lead them to their Duty, than the Exercise of the severest Discipline hereafter [if they prove vicious] will restrain them from Sin.

This is the proper Time to sow the good Seed, and to plant the Divine Word, which, by God's Blessing, will thrive and spring up to Life everlasting. 'Tis the Counsel of the Wise Man, *Prov. xxii. 6. Train up a Child in the Way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* This, indeed, is not universally true,

true, sad Experience confutes it ; for too many miscarry after the best and tenderest Instruction, too many through the Influence of bad Company, the Prevalency of inward Corruptions, and incurable Obstinacy, do either despise the Counsel and Example of their Parents, or else suffer (by an unaccountable Carelessness) the Impressions of early Virtue and Piety to wear off. Such unhappy Children are *a Grief to their Father, and a Bitterness to her that bare them*, Prov. xvii. 25. They, in a notorious Manner, disparage their Birth, their Parentage, and their Education ; and, like the Sons of good old *Eli*, are publick Scandals, and do all the Wickedness they can, to bring down their Parents gray Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave. However, the Backsliding and Miscarriage of some, must not be made Use of as an Argument to discourage Parents in their Duty to others. Whether some will hear or forbear ; whether they will attend unto and learn, or reject good Counsel ; yet if Men are desirous to save their own Souls, they must be faithful in teaching their Children diligently, *all those Things which God hath commanded them, and talk of them when they sit in their Houses, when they lie down, and when they rise up*. They must use all Opportunities God puts into their Hands, and take all Advantages to inculcate and impress those Things upon them ; and be earnest and diligent that they may take deep Root in them, that from Childhood they may

## 12      *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

know *the holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Jesus Christ.* Early Instruction is the ordinary Way of doing our Children Good, and securing them from Evil; without this there is no Foundation to build a rational Hope upon. To become Proficients in the School of Christ, Men must take that Course, and follow that Method which their Lord and Master prescribes as the Way to it. This is direct, and the only possible Way, as to Men, to become wise unto Salvation. And this Way or Course is Instruction, which Men must regard, and be very diligent about, for the Purposes spoken of, and that for this Reason, because if they expect and look for it some other Way, they then presume without a Warrant: And though the Endeavours of Men be very inconsiderable to such an End, yea nothing at all without the divine Blessing, yet there is no regular Hope without them. We must do our Duty, do our best, and utmost, and what is required of us, and leave the Issue to God.

If therefore good Men be careful and diligent in the Discharge of this early Duty, to initiate and instruct their Children in the Principles of Religion, and to lead them in the Practice thereof by their own Example, they may then comfortably hope the Fruit will be answerable to their Pains. But if the tender Age, by the unkind and slothful Parent be neglected, and the Children left to themselves, or indulged in Folly and Idleness, and suffered to contract



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 13

contract evil Habits, and to be confirmed in them, his Authority then will be of little Force, and his Counfel and Example, though ever so good, too weak to reclaim them. Youth is the choice Season and Time of Life to prepare the Heart, and plant Religion. If therefore Parents sleep, or neglect this Seed-Time, if they can find neither Hearts nor Hands, neither Leisure nor Disposition to improve it, they are ill Husbandmen, foolish, and faulty; and the Diligence and Providence of little Insects should both shame and correct them, unto whom *Solomon* sends them to learn Instruction, *Prov. vi. 6, 7, 8. Go to the Ant, thou Slug-gard; consider her Ways and be wise: Which having no Guide, Overseer, or Ruler, provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harveft.* By the bare Instinct of Nature, those little Creatures are led to exert themselves, in the proper Season of the Year, to gather in, and to lay up in Store, against a Time of Want and Scarcity. Youth is our Summer Season, and the best of Seasons too, to husband our Time, to prepare the Heart, and sow the Seed, which, by God's Blessing will flourish, and spring up to eternal Life. This is our Plowing and Sowing Season; now we plow in Hope, and sow in Hope, and usually God makes us Partakers of our Hope.

3. Let us consider what is required of Children themselves, in Order to attain and reach the Ends of Parental Instruction, *i. e.* in Order to become wise unto Salvation. They are to



## 14 Of Knowing the Scripture.

to attend unto their Parents Instruction attentively and patiently, to weigh and ponder it seriously, to meditate upon it frequently, and to improve it diligently, and to believe it unfeignedly. As their Duty branches out in these several Respects, 'tis requisite to speak particularly to each of them.

(1.) Children are to attend unto their Parents Instruction attentively and patiently. This is spoken in Opposition to all careless, heedless, and negligent Hearing; and to all tedious and impatient Waiting under it. For let the Instruction which is given be ever so good, so seasonable, so suitable and subservient to the Ends of Knowledge; let it be delivered in the most mild and melting Manner, and the very Language express how much the Childrens Interest is at the Parent's Heart, and how fain he would have them wise and happy; yet all will turn to no Account, and be wholly lost upon them, if they be heedless of it, and impatient under it. For he that is careless, and unattentive in Hearing, hath no Mind to learn; and he that is indisposed to, or hath no Mind to learn, had rather be any where than where Instruction is given. Saith the wise Preacher, *Prov. xv. 5. A Fool despiseth his Father's Instruction.* Though it be ever so beneficial and conducive to his Comfort here, and his Happiness for ever, yet he sets it at naught, he despises and disregards it, and by Virtue thereof deprives himself of the Benefit of it, and exposeth himself to the greatest Danger thereby.

thereby. Saith Wisdom, *Because I have called, and ye refused; ye have set at naught all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof: I will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh. When your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind; then shall you call upon me, but I will not answer; you shall seek me early, but shall not find me,* Prov. i. 24, 25, &c. The Despisers of Counsel are foolish Children, they reject their own Mercies, and pursue their own Ruin. For in rejecting the Counsel of God for their Amendment, they virtually reject the Means of Life, and take such a Course as will unavoidably issue in Death; according to *Solomon*, 'tis not more a Parent's Duty to teach and instruct, than 'tis Children's Duty to hear and learn. *Prov. iv. i. Hear, ye Children, the Instruction of a Father, and attend to know Understanding.* And ver. 20. *My Son, attend to my Words, incline thine Ear unto my Sayings.* The most excellent Things of God's Law and Gospel, which Parents in Season, and out of Season, do read unto, and instruct their Children in, must be heedfully regarded; They must listen to them seriously and attentively; they must retain them stedfastly, and wait upon them unweariedly: Yea, they must come with a good Disposition, and with an humble and teachable Spirit, or they will profit them little.

(2.) Children must seriously weigh and ponder their Parents Instruction. They must ponder

## 16 Of Knowing the Scripture.

der and consider from whence it came, the Motives of it, and the Weight and Importance thereof. (1.) They must ponder and consider from whence it came. Originally it came from Heaven ; from God himself, the Fountain of Truth and Blessedness, whose Creatures we are, and upon whom we depend every Moment for Breath and Life : And mediately, from the Authority and Affections of our tender Parents. Those very Persons whom God hath made Instruments of our natural Beings, he hath trusted with the Care of our early Instruction, and holds them to the strict and punctual Performance thereof ; saying, *All those Things which I command thee this Day, shall be in thy Heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy Children*, Deut. vi. 6, 7. From which Words we may observe, That 'tis not sufficient for Parents to mind and regard God's Word themselves, and by Faith and Affection pursue their own Happiness by it ; but they are deeply concerned, and expressly commanded, to be early, dexterous and diligent in instructing their Children therein likewise : That it might be of equal Advantage to both, even the Power of God for the Salvation of Parents and Children. Thus if Children seriously weigh and ponder the Original Author, and the Instruments from and by whom their Instructions come, *viz.* From the Living God, and their loving Parents, and the Design of them, even their Advantage and Happiness, then, surely, they will readily and thankfully embrace,

brace, and by the Grace of God live up unto them.

(2.) Weigh and ponder the Motives of it. The Motives which induce Parents, and universally prevail with them, thus to instruct their Children, are, (1.) Obedience to God, and a due Regard for their own Salvation. And, (2.) Affection to their Children, expressed in a due Care for their Happiness. (1.) Obedience to God, and a due Regard for their own Salvation. Parents do not thrust themselves into this Office without a Commission, uncalled, and uncommanded: They do not set up for Teachers and Guides in their Families, out of a vain Conceit of their own Abilities; purely to show their Parts, and exercise their Authority over their Children in spiritual Matters, but in Obedience to the Divine Will. That God, who is the Lord of the Universe, and the Judge of Angels and Men, and determines their State for ever; whose Servants they be, and upon whose Providence they depend daily, for Being and Preservation, hath made it their Duty, and holds them to the Performance thereof. And they cannot decline nor neglect it, without the greatest Danger to themselves; without exposing themselves to the Penalty and Rigour of the Law, and incurring the Divine Displeasure. For consider, Matters of Duty, made so by the Divine Authority, as in the holy Scriptures, are not to be dispensed with; for though they have no meritorious Virtue ascribed to them, though they be no Grounds of

D

Confi-



## 18 Of Knowing the Scripture.

Confidence, yet they are of vast Importance to the Souls of Men, as Means: for upon their conscientious Compliance with them, or notorious Contempt of them, depends, under Christ, their endless Blifs or Woe. One of them is a comfortable Evidence of every Thing that is both desirable and good, to encourage Hope, and raise Expectation of Blessedness, but the other sadly presages inevitable Ruin: Yea, if it be persisted in, it accelerates and seals the Doom of the unrelenting. *Such as will not that I should reign over them, saith our Saviour, bring them hither, and slay them before me*, Luke xix. 27. Now in as much as the Favour of God, and Men's final Happiness; or his Displeasure, and their endless Misery; Things either of the most blessed, glorious, and comfortable Moment, or of the most horrible, dreadful, and direful Consequence, be the Fruit of their Obedience or Disobedience: What Parents then, who have the Reason of Men, but more especially the Faith of Christians, will demur herein? Will be careless and lukewarm in their early Instruction? Or will not rather engage chearfully therein, with the most zealous Affection; and that because the Will of God, and their own Salvation requires it, and hath made it necessary? Which was the first Motive proposed to induce Parents to the early Instruction of their Children. But, (2.) Another Motive is sincere Affection to their Children, expressed in a due Care and Concern for their Happiness. Children who are nearer to their Parents, by Nature



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 19

Nature and Blood, than any other Creatures, are also dearer to their Affections; and the dearer they are to their Affections, the more tenderly they regard them, and the more ready, active, and ardent they be to serve them. Now there is a double Duty incumbent on Parents towards their Children, which Nature, Love and Religion prompts them unto, and requires of them. *First*, A Care of their Bodies, and temporal Welfare in this World; which must be suitable to their Abilities, and sufficient to the Ends of a useful and comfortable Life. Saith the Apostle, *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own House, he hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*, 1 Tim. v. 8. And, *Secondly*, A due Care for their Souls, and their final Happiness. This, indeed, is by far the greatest of the two, and of the most vast Importance: For the former relates only to their perishing Bodies, to the Comforts of this fading Life, which issue in certain Death; but the latter respects their immortal Souls, and immortal Happiness in Heaven, which will ever abide, and never fail, nor decay, nor perish, but be always the same to endless Generations.

This very Happiness which is infinitely great and good, which is the Completion of all their Hopes, the Satisfaction of all their Desires, and the Perfection of all their Powers, is the principal Care of pious Parents. 'Tis nearest their Hearts, and dearest to their Souls; and Affection to their Children induceth them to take

## 20 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

all due Care, and to use all possible Diligence to interest them in it, and to prepare them for it. To this End they enter them early in the School of Christ, and do read, and pray, and counsel, and instruct them in every Thing that is requisite for them (and they are capable of) to know, to believe, and practise, in Order to do them good, to make them so, and to train them up for Glory. This good Work Parents engage in, and carry on with the most tender Affection, and indefatigable Zeal. And no Wonder they do so, because 'tis their Children's Life, even their eternal Life. And what should not Men and Women do, or what should they spare upon such Accounts? Bare Nature inclines Men to pity and regard the Lives of their Beasts; how much more doth Grace, or sanctified Affection in Parents, move them to commiserate their Children, and to awaken in them a tender Concern for their Happiness: That such precious Souls for whom Christ died, may not miscarry, and be lost through their Default and Neglect. Thus if Children seriously consider the Motives of Parental Instruction, *viz.* Obedience to God, and Regard for their own Salvation: And sincere Affection to them, expressed in a due Care for their Happiness: If there be any Virtue, or commendable Qualities, or Disposition in them to that which is good, then will they think on these Things, and thankfully receive them, as so many Tokens and Expressions of their tender Care, and unfeigned Affection, and value them accordingly. (3.) Chil-

(3.) Children must meditate upon their Parents Instructions frequently. For 'tis not so much the Goodness of the Counsel that is given, as the cordial receiving, and ordinary minding of it, that benefits them. This in the Judgment of the wisest, is a sure Way to improve in Knowledge, *Prov. ii. 1, 2, 5. My Son, if thou wilt receive my Words, and hide my Commandments with thee. So that thou incline thine Ear unto Wisdom, and apply thine Heart unto Understanding, then shalt thou find the Knowledge of God.* The receiving and laying up of divine Counsel in our Minds and Hearts, or the frequent Exercise of our Minds and Memories upon it by Meditation, ripens and matures our Conceptions of it, and makes the Impression thereof deep and durable. And upon serious Enquiry, I believe, 'twill be found, That the Reason why the Counsels of God, and the good Instructions of Men, do affect so slightly, print and impress so faintly, and vanish away so quickly out of the Mind, is not owing so much to a frail and slippery Memory, as to the Neglect of Meditation. The Apostle was very sensible of this, and therefore seems to caution *Timothy* against it, as well as urge him to the contrary Practice: Saying, *Neglect not the Gift of God in thee, meditate on these Things; that thy Profiting may appear to all,* 1 Tim. iv. 14, 15. Meditation is the Nurse of Wisdom; it feeds and nourisheth it. The more frequently Children ruminate and think upon divine Instructions,

the

## 22      *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

the more conversant they be with them in their Minds, and the oftener they meditate upon them, the greater will be their Knowledge and Experience of them ; the better they'll understand them, and the greater Influence they will have upon their Hearts, in Order to the Practice of them.

(4.) 'Tis Children's Duty also to improve their Parents Instruction diligently. This is one main End of Instruction, and what renders it truly beneficial ; but if this fails, 'tis then wholly lost, as Water spilt upon the Ground, and can never be recovered. This Consideration is of Weight, and every Way sufficient, if attended unto, to awaken Children's Diligence, and to excite them to be speedy and earnest in improving those Mercies which the Living God, and their loving Parents most freely and indulgently bestow upon them ; and cause them to take Care that their profiting do bear some Proportion thereunto. They must take Heed that the Fruits and Effects of such heavenly Instructions, do appear in their Lives and Conversations. For they are not to rest satisfied in barely attending to what is taught them ; their Business lies in being ready and diligent in practising what is required of them. Hearers of God's Word, and of that which is good, they may be, but they will never improve, amend, and grow better, and wiser thereby, except they be Doers of it. 'Tis the Apostle's Caution, *Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only ; deceiving your own Souls,*



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 23

*Souls*, James i. 22. This should be carefully attended unto, by every one who enters into the Christian Race ; because such as rest satisfied in Hearing only, do take up with that which will rather prejudice than profit them : And, in Effect, they put a Cheat and Fallacy upon their own Souls, and greatly hazard their Happiness. For nothing is to the Purpose in Religion, but what answers the Design of it, and agrees with the Tenour of its Doctrines, Precepts, and Promises. Hearing, indeed, is a Duty, and in Order to Practice and Improvement ; but if it doth not produce them, 'tis insignificant, and doth rather offend than please God. 'Twas a severe Reflection upon the *Jews*, by the holy Prophet, *And they come unto thee as the People cometh, and they sit before thee as my People, and they hear thy Words, but they will not do them. For with their Mouth they shew much Love, but their Heart goeth after their Covetousness. And lo, thou art to them a very lovely Song, of one that hath a pleasant Voice, and can play well on an Instrument, for they hear thy Words, but they do them not*, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. Children, as well as Men, may embrace every Opportunity of Hearing that doth offer ; they may do it stately, and, in Appearance, with great Delight, Affection, and Devotion too ; but if what they hear be wholly unregarded and neglected, if it hath no Influence upon their Hearts, to warm them with Love to God, nor upon their Lives, to reform them ; if it doth

## 24      *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

doth neither restrain them from Sin, nor excite them to Holiness; but in Spite of all they persevere in their ungodly Ways, and without any Remorse or Shame, eagerly pursue their Lusts and Pleasures, this is a sad Symptom of a spiritual Judgment, which we have too much Reason to fear is fallen upon them, *That seeing they see, and not perceive; and hearing they hear, and not understand. For the Heart of this People is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull of Hearing, and their Eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Heart, and be converted, and I should heal them,* Acts xxviii. 26, 27. compared with *Isa. vi. 9, 10.* This very Judgment came upon the *Jews*, and that for the very same Iniquity too; and as there is a Resemblance in the same Sin, so likewise is there a great Resemblance in the same Calamity.

Those Children under the Discipline of pious Parents, and other good Instructors, who have all the Advantages they can desire to become wise and good, and to continue so; who hear and read the divine Word frequently, and see it practised before them daily, may be said to dwell at Wisdom's Gate, and to sit under the very Influences of Heaven; under those Influences which soften and prepare the most obdurate, to receive the holy Seed, and which, by God's Blessing, brings forth good Fruit.

What then must their Hearts be composed of, and to what a Degree hardened, that never

ver melts, nor tenderly relents, under such Influences, but are naturally as hard and blind, and barren, as if the Grace of God had never appeared to them? Barren, unfruitful Hearers, like barren Trees, are fit for nothing but the Fire. And the Sentence is, *Cut them down, why cumber they the Ground?* Children nor Men, never profit and improve by the Holy Scriptures, till by the Grace of God, they believe them unfeignedly, and practise them diligently: When they mix Faith with their Hearing, and join Obedience with their Believing, then they improve and advance towards the *Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*; and then they gradually increase in that saving Knowledge which makes them *wise unto Salvation*. This, I say, is attained in the Way of Duty and Diligence; and is the very Method *Timothy* took to arrive at it, as is evident by the Apostle's Charge to him, *1 Tim. iv. 13, 14, 15. Give attendance unto Reading, Exhortation and Doctrine. Neglect not the Gift that is in thee. Meditate upon these Things, give thy self wholly unto them, that thy profiting may appear to all.* Though *Timothy* had uncommon Gifts, yet he must not neglect the ordinary Means of Improvement; much less must we; for though we may have the best of Teachers, and the best Precepts, and Example set before us, yet we shall never become good Proficients in the School of Christ, nor make any tolerable Progress in the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures without Dili-

## 26 Of Knowing the Scripture.

gence. Diligence is the only Way of Improvement; by God's Blessing it masters all Difficulties, and makes the Ways of Religion smooth, pleasant and profitable. It maketh us rich, as the wise Man tells us. It enriches our Souls as well as our Bodies, it stocks our Heads with Knowledge, and our Hearts with Grace, as well as our Houses with Stores.

This is the only Way (as to Men) either to attain Grace, or to improve it. Saith blessed *Paul*, *Faith coming by Hearing*, (*i. e.*) attentive and diligent Hearing is the Means of it: Not, indeed, in exclusion of Prayer and other Means, but in conjunction with them. And by this Means also we improve the Grace we already have; as we learn from the Apostle *Peter* in his two Epistles, first Chapter, *ver.* 4, 5, 6, 7. where speaking of those who had already obtained precious Faith, and been made Partakers of the Divine Nature, yet he would not have them rest therein, as if their Work was wholly done, and they were already perfect; but exhorts them to press forward, for the obtaining more Grace; saying, *Give all Diligence, to add to your Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness brotherly Kindness and Charity.* The Apostle would have them move forwards in the Ways of Christ, in the several Gradations mentioned, and so grow up in all God-like Qualities, and commendable Virtues; and increase both in the  
in-



inward Degrees, and outward Exercise of them. If this President set before us, be carefully copied by us, as by those who are Examples for our Imitation, no doubt, but by the Divine Favour, our Improvement will be very considerable.

(5.) Children must also unfeignedly believe the Holy Things taught them. This is so necessary in order to profit by the Scriptures, that 'tis not possible without it, as the Apostle assures us, in *Heb. xi. 6. But without Faith 'tis not possible to please God.* This absolute Expression of St. *Paul* will by no means seem strange, if we consider, that the want of Faith argues the want of other Virtues. And if this be true, let Men then, by specious Shews, pretend to what they please, yet if they believe not, they cannot love God sincerely, nor fear him filially, nor serve him faithfully and acceptably, nor have any comfortable Fellowship with him, in any Acts of Duty and Worship whatsoever. Comfort, Joy and Profit, are the Fruits of Faith, and are commonly more or less, in proportion to the stronger or weaker Degrees of it, but they never spring up, nor thrive in the barren Soil of Infidelity. Infidelity, like the Wilderness, abounds in Brambles and Thorns, the Effects of the Curse; but Faith is loaded with the Fruits of Paradise, with Comfort, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness, Temperance, &c. *Gal. v.* He that hath true Faith shall want nothing that is requisite, either for Pardon,

## 28 Of Knowing the Scripture.

don, Purity, or Life ; but he that wants it, is destitute of every Thing that is requisite to justify and save him. This Grace is exceeding precious and valuable at all Times, in the Christian Warfare ; it is both the Armour and Ornament of the Soul ; it keeps evil Things from us, and procures good Things for us : It justifies us, as the Apostle testifies, *Rom. v. 1. Being justified by Faith we have Peace with God through Jesus Christ.* It saveth Men from Wrath and Ruin, and brings them to endless Blessedness. *John iii. 16. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting Life.* It subdues the World, and all its Allurements ; *This is the Victory that overcomes the World, even your Faith,* 1 John v. 4. And it makes the Scripture effectual for the Salvation of Men ; 'tis *the Power of God for the Salvation of every one that believeth,* Rom. i. 16. And it maketh wise unto Salvation, as in the Text. And, *from a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Jesus Christ.*

By which 'tis plainly intimated, that the Influence and Efficacy the Holy Scriptures have upon the Hearts and Lives of Men, to form them to Virtue, and virtuous Actions, is by the Means of Faith ; if they believe them sincerely, I mean, if they so believe them, as to mind them diligently, and to meditate upon them frequently, they will soon find the excellent Virtue of them, in renewing and altering the Frames,  
the

the Faculties, and Powers of their Souls, by enlightning the Mind, humbling the Will, melting the Heart, and sanctifying the Affections and Passions, and making them heavenly in their Minds, Perceptions, and Conversation.

But without Faith the Holy Scriptures are but as a dead Letter, cold, insipid, and lifeless, without vital Heat to warm the Heart, and vital Efficacy to reform the Life. The want of Faith in Men doth strangely alter the Qualities of the good Word of God; 'tis like stupifying Medicines, it benumbs it, and strips it of its native Strength and Vigour, and causeth it to lose its Influence, Authority, and Efficacy, upon their Minds and Hearts. For they that believe not, regard nothing of God's holy Word; they see no Excellencies in it, to render it desirable, and to determine them in the Love and Choice of it. And when at any Time they are urged to believe it, how apt are they, in contempt, to answer, *What is thy beloved, more than another's beloved, that thou dost so charge us?* Wherein doth the Scriptures excel the Books of moral Men? Or, rather, are they not excelled by them? The good Word of God, to such Men, is unfavoury, ridiculous, impertinent, and non-sense; yea, every Thing that merits Contempt and Aversion. Saith the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

## 30 Of Knowing the Scripture.

*cerned.* The want of a mental Eye, or Eye of Faith, is the only Reason why Men dislike, dislike and slight the Oracles of God, and why, in their Judgment, they appear silly and trifling Matters. Oh the wretched Temper of Mind such Men inherit! And, what Infatuation and Madness doth possess them, thus to depreciate and diminish the excellent Worth and Value of the most sacred Things, and induce them to treat them with Scorn and Disdain, and to regard them no more than a Tale that is told? All this is owing unto, and is the Fruit of Infidelity. Men's Diffidence of the Holy Scriptures; their not believing they are from God, the Means of Life, and worthy of all Acceptation, renders them cheap and despicable in their Eyes; makes them slight and neglect them, and obstructs the Efficacy of them, that they neither lead them to the Performance of their Duty, nor restrain them from the Practice of Sin.

IV. Let us demonstrate the Excellency and Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, for the Purposes spoken of (*viz.*) to make Children *wise unto Salvation*: As in the Text, *And that from a Child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Jesus Christ.* These two Things which are attributed to the Scriptures, shall be treated of in course. The Excellency of the Holy Scriptures, may be demonstrated from the following Considerations.

(1.)



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 31

(1.) From the Consideration of their Original.

(2.) From the Majesty of their Stile ; the Truth and Purity of their Doctrine, and in being suited to the Age and Capacity of Mankind.

(3.) From the Accomplishment of the Prophecies, and from the uncontrollable Miracles that were wrought to confirm them.

(4.) From their being the Rule of Faith and Practice.

(1.) The Excellency of the Holy Scriptures may be demonstrated, from the Consideration of their Original. They had their Being and Extraction from Heaven: God himself, who is the Fountain of Wisdom, Truth, and Perfection, is the Author of them, saith Saint Paul to Timothy, second Epistle, *ch. iii. 16. All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God.* 'Tis God's own Word, and His own Will, and by a Sovereign Act of Grace 'tis revealed to us. 'Tis infinitely above the Human Mind to invent. The most penetrating Naturalist, with all his Skill and Sagacity, could never discover it. And we had never known the profound Mystery of Redemption by Jesus Christ, which the Holy Angels desire to pry into ; nor, that penitent Believers shall be justified and saved, nor the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, if it had not been revealed unto us. All those Divine Truths, which in their own Nature, be as excellent, as they be comfortable and heavenly, are not the Product of Men, but the

## 32 Of Knowing the Scripture.

the *Inspiration of God*. Saith the Apostle *Peter*, *The Prophecy came not in old Time by the Will of Men, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. Men were but the Instruments by which, or the Organ through which, the Holy Ghost hath spoken to us, in the Scriptures. Or, as one excellently expresses it, in his Exposition upon a parallel Scripture. The same Spirit that breathed Reason into us, breathed Revelation among us, 2 *Tim.* iii. 16. 2 *Pet.* i. 21.

(2.) The Excellency of the Holy Scriptures further appears, from the Majesty of their Stile, from the Truth and Purity of their Doctrines, and in being suited to the Age and Capacities of Mankind. The Majesty and Sublimity of the Scripture Stile, is matchless and incomparable, and such only as is possible to the Divine Author of them: And the Truth and Purity of their Doctrines, which contains every Thing that tends to the Perfection and Happiness of Man, and the Exaltation of God's Glory and Honour, do in a most convincing Manner argue their Excellence. Those Holy Writings are as true and pure, as they are sublime and heavenly: There is no Defect nor Blemish in them, nor the least Mixture of Vanity, Error, or Folly, adhering to them. All the Words of my Mouth (saith Wisdom) *are in Righteousness, and there is nothing froward or perverse in them. For my Mouth shall speak Truth, and Wickedness is an Abomination to my Lips*, Prov. viii. 7, 8. We may depend  
up-

on it with the greatest Certainty, that as God never speaks rashly, hastily, falsely, nor unadvisedly, neither will he ever impose upon, nor deceive us. He abhors Falshood and Dissimulation; *He is a God of Truth, without Iniquity, just and right.* All his Words are in Truth and Righteousness, and more stable than the Frames and Pillars of Heaven and Earth, for these Things (how durable soever they may seem to us) shall pass away and be dissolved; but his Truth shall never fail: They are of everlasting Duration, and shall firmly abide to all succeeding Ages, down to Eternity, *without any Variableness, or shadow of Turning.* They are perfectly pure and holy; they are so in themselves, and so towards us; and their Design and Tendency is to make us *Holy in all manner of Conversation.* Their Purity may be argued, both from their Opposition to every Thing which is vile, prophane, and odious; and their Harmony and Agreement with every Thing that is holy and good.

(1.) From their Opposition to every Thing that is vile, prophane, and odious. No one Thing under Heaven is more opposite to another, than the pure Word of God is to Impiety, Sensuality, Falshood, Lies, prophane Swearing, Infidelity, &c. It musters up all its Powers, and proclaims War against them; 'tis always opposing and resisting them, by its Counsels, Commands, Threats and Exhortations: "I will never live amicably and friendly with them, nor submit to a Truce upon any Terms;

F

but

## 34 Of Knowing the Scripture.

but is constantly fighting against them; and nothing but a complete Victory will finish the Warfare: And though it be vigorously carried on and maintained, yet it will not be perfectly obtained till Death, and the End of the World. Now, that the pure Word of God doth thus militate, and oppose all those Evils and Enormities mentioned, we shall be fully convinced, upon reciting a few Texts, *Rom. vi. 12. Let not Sin reign in your mortal Bodies. Col. iii. 5, 6, 8. Mortify your Members that are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence, and Covetouſneſs, which is Idolatry: For which Things ſake, the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Diſobedience. Put off Anger, Wrath, Malice, Blaſphemy, and filthy Communication out of your Mouth. Eph. v. 11. Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, but reprove them rather. Titus ii. 11, 12. Deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World. Depart from Iniquity. Crucify the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts thereof. Cut off the Right-Hand-Sin, and pluck out the Right-Eye-Luſt. That the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve Sin. Rom. vi. 6. Die unto Sin. For the Unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor effeminate Perſons, nor Abusers of themſelves with Mankind; nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor*  
Re-



*Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God,* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. These few Texts are sufficient to shew, how opposite God's pure Word is to Sin, and all the Works of Darknes. It hath no Fellowship nor Concord with them; it shews no Favour towards them; it rejects with Indignation all Terms of Peace with them, and enjoins every one that lists in its Service to engage against them, and to shew no Mercy to them. Yea, it allows no Man to be their Advocate, to extenuate and excuse them, or to plead for them, and defend them, but requires every one to express their Dislike of them, and to cry out in the Height of their Aversion against them, saying, Lord, let them be crucified, let them be crucified, that they may not reign in our mortal Bodies. And now, should it be asked, Why God's pure and holy Word is thus severe against Sin, and the Works of the Devil? And why also, It engages us in the same Cause and Quarrel, and will have us beware of them, and guard against them? I answer, Not merely because 'tis contrary to them in its own Being and Nature, but in a great measure out of Compassion to us: For those evil Things, that stick closer to us than our Garments; that follow us in all Places and Company; that do insinuate themselves into our Affections, and do so easily beset us, are our worst and greatest Enemies; they have stripp'd us of our original Purity and Righteousness; they have cast us out of Paradise; they have intailed Miseries innumerable upon

## 36 Of Knowing the Scripture.

us; and to render our Case miserable beyond Expression, and without Remedy, they restlessly pursue the Life of our Souls. This bare Narrative is sufficient to excite our Abhorrence, and to kindle our Indignation against such Enemies, and to induce us to withstand and resist them with all our Might.

(2.) The Purity of the Holy Scriptures may be also argued, from their Harmony and Agreement with every Thing that is Holy and Good. Now the Harmony of the Scriptures, with every Thing that is Holy and Good, appears in these Particulars.

- (1.) In Affociating themselves with it.
- (2.) In Commanding and Commending it.
- (3.) In Blessing Men for it.

(1.) The good Word of God is an inseparable Companion to Holy and Good Men. It will never desert nor forsake them, so as to leave them wholly destitute of its Aids and Influences in Time of need. *Prov. viii. 12. I Wisdom dwell with Prudence. I rest in the Hearts of them that have Understanding, Prov. xiv. 33. It dwells richly and comfortably in them, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Heart of the Contrite ones, Isa. lvii. 15.* Yea, it abides with them, in every respect, to their Advantage, as their Counsellor, their Comforter and Director, in all their Straits, their Doubts and Difficulties.

(2.) In Commanding and Commending Holiness. The good Word of God allows of nothing short of this; 'tis in its own Nature  
and

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 37

and Tendency Holy, Just, and Good, and requires a Conformity hereunto of every one; as the following Texts demonstrate. *Lev. xx. 7. Sanctify your Selves, and be ye Holy.* 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. *But as he that hath called you, is Holy, so be ye Holy in all manner of Conversation. Because it is written, Be ye Holy, for I am Holy.* So likewise in commending of it. Holiness implies a sincere Reformation of Heart and Life, or a virtuous Soul within, accompanied with an uniform Conversation without. This, in the Eyes of God's Holy Word, is exceeding precious; 'tis its Darling and Delight; for it, Heaven it self, and all good Things, are laid up and secured. The *Psalmist* queries, *Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy Holy Hill?* The Divine Word answers, *He that walketh Uprightly, and worketh Righteousness, and speaketh the Truth in his Heart,* (i. e.) He that is Holy and Upright in his Heart and Ways. Now God's Word highly commends Holiness in several Respects. In speaking well of them that inherit it. In gracing them with the best of Characters for the Sake of it; and in rewarding them with the greatest Blessing through Christ Jesus for it.

Thus the Scripture Worthies obtained a good Report, and a blessed Testimony, saith God of Holy Abraham, *Gen. xviii. 19. I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment;*

## 38 Of Knowing the Scripture.

*ment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. And 'twas the blessed Characters of Job, David, and Nathanael, that they were holy and upright Men. Of the first 'tis said in his Praise, That he was a perfect and upright Man, and one that feared God, and eschewed Evil, Job i. 1. And of the second, That he was a Man after God's own Heart. And of the last, That he was an Israelite indeed, in whom is no Guile, John i. 47. They were Persons of eminent Piety, Sincerity, and Integrity, and perfect Strangers to Craft, Deceit, and Double-mindedness.*

This is the Commendation God's Word gives them, and 'tis so much the better, the more glorious, and the greater to be rejoiced in, as it comes from the Fountain of Truth and Perfection ; from the most glorious and blessed God, who can neither dissemble, nor deceive us. In a Word, such holy and upright ones, are both commended and rewarded, *Mat. xxv. 21. Well done good and faithful Servant, thou hast been faithful over a few Things, I will make thee Ruler over many Things, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

(3.) In blessing Men for it. This Angelical Quality (Holiness) hath always a Blessing attending it. And though sometimes it be expressed by various Terms and Characters, such as Poverty of Spirit, Meekness, Hungering and Thirsting after Righteousness, Mercifulness, Purity of Heart, and Peace-making, yet whenever these various Terms signify this heavenly Virtue



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 39

Virtue we are speaking of, they are blessed ; as we read *Mat. v. 3, 5, 6, &c. Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy. Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God.* In all these Particulars 'tis evident what a singular Harmony and Concord there is between the holy Scriptures, and every Thing that is holy and good.

And further, The Excellence of the holy Scriptures may be also argued, from their Suitableness to the Age and Capacities of Mankind. Though they contain the highest Sense, and deepest Mysteries, which exercise the Mind, and Enquiry of the Angels ; yet in Things necessary to Salvation, they are framed to the Capacities of Men, and level to the Age of Children. They as far excel all humane Compositions, both in Sense and Stile, and Simplicity and Efficacy, as the Heavens are high above the Earth. They are adapted by the infinitely wise God, for the Use and Edification of Mankind, young and old, in every Stage of Life. They are *Milk for Babes, and strong Meat for those of full Age*, Heb. v. They contain Doctrines that are most plain and easy, which Children may understand, being suitable to the Capacity of the youngest Scholar in the School  
of

## 40 Of Knowing the Scripture.

of Christ; and do serve to inform, to persuade, and lead them to their early Duty, to encourage them to continue in it, and to enable them to grow up more and more, in the Love, the Knowledge, the Belief, and Practice of them, that their Proficiency, or Profiting, may appear to all Men. The holy Scriptures are most certainly fitted to the Capacity of Youth, as well as of adult Persons; otherwise they would never be so often call'd upon, and put in Mind of by them, to *remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth, before the evil Days come*, Eccles. xii. 1. *And to hear the Instruction of a Father*, Prov. i. 8. Neither would the Apostle Paul have said to Timothy, that *from a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures*, &c. Which in the Judgment of sincere Christians, will (I believe) pass as Proof, to confirm the Truth of what is advanced.

(3.) The Excellency of the holy Scriptures is also demonstrated, from their being the only Rule of Faith, and Practice. None, save the divine Records, whose Author is God, and which came from the Fountain of Wisdom and Truth, can be absolutely confided in, and are capable to guide us to Glory. The Distance is great, the Gate strait, the Way narrow, the Enemies and Difficulties numerous and great, and Men's Understandings so weak and limited, that we must utterly despair of getting thither, by any Schemes of their forming. What Zophar said to Job, is applicable to our Purpose, with a little Variation, Job xi. 7, 8, 9.  
Canst

Of Knowing the Scripture. 41

*Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea?*

The humane Mind may as well presume to discover the infinite Depths of God's Wisdom, Justice, and Power, and the Reasons of all his Actions which are absolutely out of our Reach, as to be able to find out the Way to Heaven by it self. And if *Job*, who had the Assistance of Experience, Grace, and Providence too, to know God, cries out, *O how small a Portion of him is heard and known of!* How little indeed, and next to nothing then, should we know and hear of him and his Ways, if Jesus Christ had not discovered them to us in the Gospel! He hath given us the Words of eternal Life: And these Words, and none else, we must regard, as the Rule of Faith and Life. For these only tell us with Certainty, in whom we must believe, and what we must believe, and do, and bear, in Order to eternal Life. This divine Revelation is our sure and certain Guide, through a sinful, troublesome World, to the Land of Uprightness. It leads us into all Truth, it fortifies us against all Errors, and upon it we may securely rely, for Counsel and Comfort, and for Direction and Assistance, in all our Doubts and Duties, and in all our Straits and Difficulties. But all other Compossures and Writings are fallible

## 42 Of Knowing the Scripture.

and humane, and if they differ from, and are opposite to the holy Scriptures, they will lead and lose us. We must follow the Directions of Men (however dignified and distinguished) no further than they follow Christ. If they deviate from the Rule of Life, and teach Doctrines that have no Foundation in God's Word, we must reject them. *To the Law and the Testimony* (saith the Prophet) *if Men speak not according to this Word, it is because they have no Light in them*, Isa. viii. 20. In a Word, The holy Scripture is the Standard of Truth; by it we are to determine all our Disputes and Controversies, and to regulate our Practice and Conversation. Yea, by it we are to try and examine the Truth of other Writings, and so approve or reject them, as they be either consistent with, or opposite to it. But so much for the first Particular, The Excellency of the holy Scriptures.

(2.) Let us consider their Sufficiency, as in the Text; *That from a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation. Which are able*, i.e. are sufficient, without the Help or Assistance of any other Books or Composures whatsoever, to make Men as wise and holy, as 'tis requisite and necessary for them to be, in Order for Glory. Therefore the Apostle calls them *the Power of God, for the Salvation of our Souls*, Rom. i. 16. They are the proper Means which God hath appointed for this End, and have a prevailing Efficacy to accomplish it.

'Tis



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 43

'Tis true, the bare Words of Scripture, either read or preached, are not sufficient to quench carnal Desires, or to kindle holy Love ; they cannot make the simple wise, nor the unholy meet for Heaven. But by supernatural Assistance they universally prevail, and overcome all Difficulties in the Way of their Progress. This puts Life, Spirit, Vigour, and Efficacy into them, and makes them active and powerful in their Effects, for the Illumination and Conversion of hardened, ignorant Sinners. By this Means they are *quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and are Discerners of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart*, Heb. iv. 12. With this Assistance they pull down the strong Holds, and demolish the Works of the Devil, *viz.* Idolatry, Rebellion, Infidelity, Impiety, Security, Sensuality, Presumption, Lusts, and all the Works of Darknes, and make Men heavenly in their Hearts, Conceptions, and Conversations. Yea, by this Means they are sufficient, as the Psalmist tells us, to beget Light and Knowledge in the Head, Purity and Joy in the Heart, Obedience in the Will, and Holiness in the Life. *Psal. xix. 7, 8. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoycing the Heart; the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes.* What Wisdom, Grace,

## 44 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

Comfort, or Holiness are requisite to qualify Men for Glory, are obtained by the holy Scriptures. 'Tis by Means of these that Faith, the great Christian Virtue, is obtained. Saith St. *Paul, Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*, Rom. x. 17.

God's Word is profitable for every Thing, and perfective of our Beings and Natures ; as the Apostle saith, *2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness ; that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.* 'Tis an incomparable Blessing ; 'tis the greatest the World hath to boast of, and to glory in ; It doth us and our Children the most Good, and procures for us the best Blessings ; it makes us wise, pious, and comfortable for the present, and happy for ever. What a Consideration is this, to endeavour God's Word to our Souls, and to induce us to believe it unfeignedly, and to read, and hear, and search it diligently ; since 'tis every Way able to qualify us for Blessedness ? Having this divine Book, we have no Need of the Sayings of the Heathen Philosophers, nor of the Popish Legends, nor of unwritten Traditions, to make us good Christians, perfect Men of God, and wise unto Salvation. The holy Scriptures fully answer all these Ends and Purposes, and will never fail our Expectations, if we persevere in the Belief, the Love, and Practice of them.

(2.) The

## Of *Knowing the Scripture.* 45

(2.) The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures may easily be demonstrated, by their Effects in the World.

(1.) In their Credit they have gained among Men.

(2.) In the wonderful Conversion they have produced in the World.

(1.) In the Credit and Renown they have gained among Men : They are in such Repute, and so revered and honoured by true Christians (and that so deservedly too) that nothing in the World is nearer and dearer to their Souls, nor more firmly believed and loved by them, nor meets with better Entertainment from them. They are valued by them, as a rich and inestimable Treasure, which they preserve with Care, and consult with Joy and Pleasure upon all Occasions, for their Profit and Comfort. They have recourse to them in all their Straits and Difficulties, for Counsel and Direction ; and in their Troubles and Sorrows, for Support and Refreshment. By them their Doubts are solved, their Disputes determined, their Fears dissipated, their Comforts increased, their Obedience encouraged, and their Faith and Hope confirmed and strengthened. In a Word, they do receive them with as much Thankfulness and Admiration ; and rely upon them (in Matters of the greatest Moment) with as much Certainty and Confidence, as such Sacred and Infallible Truths require ; and in token thereof, do trust their Souls, and everlasting Concernments, to their Conduct.

(2.) The

## 46 Of Knowing the Scripture.

(2.) The Holy Scriptures Sufficiency may also be demonstrated, in the wonderful Conversions they have produced in the World. Such a blessed and glorious Change have they wrought in the Minds and Hearts of Men, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, from reigning Sin to universal Holiness; and that in such a sweet and mild Way too, *viz.* by convincing Light, and perswasive Arguments, as is only possible to the prevailing Efficacy of Truth, made so by the Assistance of an infinite and almighty Agent. These holy Writings have forced their Way through the Darkness and Idolatry of the Heathens, and prevailed against the Prejudices and Obstinacies of the *Jews*. The Pagans, who once *sate in Darkness, and in the Region of the Shadow of Death*; who knew nothing of God but by the Light of Nature, and were ignorant in their Minds, vicious in their Hearts, immoral in their Lives, and idolatrous in their Principles and Practice. *Who changed the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four footed Beasts, and creeping Things*, Rom. i. 23. Yea, who were so enormously Vile, and so unmeasurably Wicked, that (to Amazement) they exceeded all Bounds, and the most obscene and filthy Lusts, and abhorred and detestable Practices were committed by them, without any shame or remorse, saith blessed *Paul* of them, in Rom. i. 29, &c. They were filled *with all Unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Covetous-*



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 47

*venousness, Maliciousness ; full of Envy, Murder, Debate, Deceit, Malignity, Backbiters, Haters of God, Despiteful, Proud, Boasters, Inventers of evil Things, Disobedient to Parents ; without Understanding, Covenant-Breakers, without natural Affection, Implacable, Unmerciful.* And in 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. we are told, *That they were Idolaters, Adulterers, Thieves, Drunkards, and Extortioners.* Yet by the Means of the holy Scriptures they were reclaimed, they were enlightened, renewed, and sanctified, and justified; and became heavenly in their Minds and Conversation. And St. Paul testifies of them, *That they were turned to God from Idols, to serve the Living and True God,* 1 Thes. i. 9. Their Profession and Practice did plainly argue the Truth of their Conversion, or of their Heart and Life Reformation. Their relinquishing of Idols, and idolatrous Worship, and turning to the Living and True God, and serving him in Righteousness and Holiness, was undoubtedly the Fruit of the Grace of God that appeared unto them, *teaching them to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts,* and enabling them to *live Righteous and Godly in Christ Jesus.* And by virtue of this blessed Change in Nature and Principles, they now became as famous and admired for Piety, Purity, Sincerity, Integrity, Charity, Fidelity and Constancy, as they were infamous, and odious, before, upon the Account of their Cruelty, Obscenity and Idolatry. While they  
were

## 48 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

were Heathens, they were in their Nature fierce, savage, cruel, without Bowels, and natural Affections, and Haters of God and Goodness; but now they are Christians they are turned into the Meek and Lamb-like Nature of Christ, and are made Holy in their Frames within, and Divine in their Conversation without. They have, according to the Apostle, *Crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts thereof*; and do abound in the Fruits of the Spirit, in *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness and Temperance*, Gal. v. 12, 13, 14.

Now, what mighty Influence and Efficacy must the Holy Scriptures have upon the Minds and Hearts of Men, that can thus change and reform them? That can humble the Proud, melt the Obdurate, enlighten the Blind, purify the Unclean, reclaim the Erroneous, and make the Simple wise unto Salvation. Yea, that can make the Savage gentle, the Cruel merciful, the Incontinent chaste, the Voluptuous temperate, the Covetous liberal, and the Implacable appeasable. And can prevail with Men, against the Interest of the Flesh, of Custom, and the powerful Prejudices of Education, to relinquish a Religion they have been trained up in, and highly approve of, and which abounds in all the Indulgences and Emoluments corrupt Nature can desire; for one that is severe, that allows no Dispensations for Sins, that flatters, and enticeth with no temporal Endowments, but requires all its Professors

fors, upon the greatest Penalty, *to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present World.* And, *to make no Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lust thereof,* Rom. xiii. 14.

And what is truly admirable in the Sacred Writings is this, That they have gained all this Repute, and wrought all those Wonders in the World, in converting Sinners to the Cross of Christ without any Human Aids; without the Assistance of Magistrates, or the Power of the Temporal Sword. They came into the World naked and destitute of Human Supports; they had no earthly Potentates to espouse and protect them, by their Interest and Power; nor Philosophers to reason and argue in the Defence of them, against the Rage and Fury of their Adversaries. They were committed unto, and published by Persons, that in the Esteem of the World, were very mean and contemptible, both upon the Account of their Knowledge and Employments: They were Persons without Credit and Reputation, and absolutely destitute of all Human Strength and Eloquence, which serves to compel and perswade Men to embrace a new Religion. One of the chiefest of them tells us, 1 Cor. ii. 4. *That his Speech, or Preaching, was not with the inticing Words of Mans Wisdom:* A crucified Saviour was all his Theme, (*i.e.*) the Doctrines of Christ's *Incarnation, Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Intercession, and Dominion,* were his whole Business. Saith he

## 50 Of Knowing the Scripture.

to the Church, *I determined not to know any Thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,* 1 Cor. ii. 2.

In a Word, That the Sacred Writings should thus prevail, and overcome all Obstacles and Difficulties in the Way of their Progress, and *turn Men from Darkness to Light, from Satan to God*; and make them *Holy in all manner of Conversation*, by the Means of such poor, mean, and despicable Persons, who wanted both Art and Eloquence to persuade Men, is an Argument of their Sufficiency, and that they are indeed, *the Power of God for our Salvation*.

But I shall add, (3.) The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures may be further demonstrated, from their Contents. They contain every Thing that is requisite in order to Blessedness; and to prepare us for it. Whatsoever is substantially Good and Necessary to Salvation, such as *Pardon of Sin, Sanctification, Adoption, Reconciliation, Perseverance and Divine Favour*, are fully contained in them: Yea, therein the *Ordinances of Life, the Means of Grace, the New Covenant, the Service of God, and the Promises*, from which we draw Comfort, and *obtain Mercy to help in Time of need*; and by virtue of which we grow up in *the Faith, the Knowledge, the Love, and Obedience of the Gospel*, and are *perfecting Holiness in the Fear of the Lord*, are plainly expressed. These Sacred Writings do perfectly teach us what we must be, and do, to be prepared for  
Glory.



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 51

Glory. They signify, That we must be *Humble, Holy, Meek, Merciful, Peaceable, Patient, Penitent, and Believing. That we must deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and live soberly and righteously, and godly, in this present World. Not fashioning our Selves according to former Lusts; but as he that hath called us is Holy, so to be Holy in all manner of Conversation,* 1 Pet. i. 14, 15. They fairly point out, and describe to us, our Threefold Duty.

(1.) Our Duty to God, *That we live godly in Christ Jesus.* That the Course and Tenor of our Lives, and the Temper and Disposition of our Hearts, be suitable to our Profession and Engagements, and every way conformable to the Commands of Christ, that according to their Quality, they may express the Truth of our Faith, the Sincerity of our Affections, and our Care to please and glorify him in all our Actions. That we do not counterfeit Religion and Virtue, nor rest in external Shews of Sincerity, when the governing Principle is Hypocrisy, knowing, *that the Form of Godliness, without the Power,* is of no significancy; it doth rather provoke than please God; 1 Tim. iii. 5. Pure Religion doth not consist in external Shews and Appearances, or in assuming the empty Name and Character of a Christian, but in *Truth, Righteousness, Faith, Love, Peace, and Obedience.* That our Profession of Christ be open, sincere, and undisguised. That without reserve we regard his whole Will, with-

## 52 Of Knowing the Scripture.

out either suppressing, or holding his *Truths in Unrighteousness*, or without being so weak, as to deny them, or so wicked as to betray them; but to let them *dwell richly with us in all Wisdom*. That we presume not, out of Favour to Flesh and Blood, to pick and choose some Duties, and reject others; but comporting ourselves with the whole Design of the Gospel, in chearfully doing, and unfeignedly believing, whatsoever it commands us; that we may have the Comfort, as well as the Commendation, *Of walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless*. Yea, that we live to him, and for him, and express our Reverence, Love, Fear, Faith and Dependence on him, in our Praises and Prayers; and by a holy and fruitful Life, *may shew forth the Virtues of him, who hath called us out of Darkness into his marvellous Light*.

2. In respect to our selves; that we be sober and moderate in our Lives and Enjoyments; that Temperance and Chastity govern our Appetites and Passions. That we abstain and retreat from *fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul*; which do not only stain and vilify it, but do also greatly disturb its Peace, and interrupt its Comfort, as well as rife it of its Purity here, and endangers its Happiness for ever. That we avoid the prophane and irreverent Use of God's Sacred Name, either by false and customary Swearing, or by taking it in vain, upon every slight and trifling Occasion. That Lying, the Vice of the Tongue,  
be

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 53

be carefully guarded against, that we *Speak evil of no Man*, Tit. iii. 2. *but speak the Truth and lie not.* That the Lord's Day, in all its sacred Employments be duly regarded ; that we presume not to do any secular Business upon that holy Day, nor profane it in Sports, nor carnal Recreations ; but seriously devote our selves, our whole Man, Bodies and Souls, to the pure Service of God all the Day, except what is to be taken up in the Works of Necessity and Mercy. That we diligently keep our Hearts from the Temptations and Allurements of the Flesh, the World, and the Devil, lest by Carelessness they should ensnare and captivate them, and alienate them from the Love of Christ, and so bring us into Bondage to divers Lusts and Pleasures. We have to do with a mad Enemy, a raging Devil, who is bent upon Mischief, and eagerly pursues our Souls to seduce and destroy them : 'Tis therefore the Apostle's Caution, 1 Pet. v. 8. saying, *Be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* That we diligently and industriously labour, in our respective Callings, for a competent or comfortable Maintenance both for our selves and our Families, and be frugal and thrifty, in laying out and laying up the Fruit thereof ; that by the Blessing of Providence it may be sufficient to answer our own Occasions, and enable us to be helpful to others in their Necessities. Saith St. Paul, Eph. iv. 8. *Labour, working with your*

## 54 Of Knowing the Scripture.

*your Hands that which is good, that you may have to give to him that needeth.*

(3.) Our Relative Duty, what we owe to our Parents, and by the holy Scriptures are obliged faithfully to discharge ; that we reverence, honour, love, and obey them. 'Tis the Apostle's Command, *Obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right*, Eph. vi. 1. All their just and reasonable Commands, which are grounded upon and agreeable to the Law of God, and the Law of Nature, we must not scruple nor dispute, but observe with Promptness and Readiness. Saith Wisdom, *Prov. vii. 1, 2. My Son, keep my Words, and hide my Commandments with thee. Keep my Commandments and live.* Which doth intimate, that long Life, and happy Days, are entailed upon obedient Children ; as God very early declared in the Moral Law. *Exod. xx. 12. Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy Days may be long upon the Land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* The sure Way to live long and comfortable in the Possession of the divine Blessings, is to reverence, love, and obey our Parents, and in Case of Need to succour and support them. Yea, we must labour to be conformable to their Example, as well as to execute their Precepts : That whatsoever Goodness, Piety, Justice, Temperance, Patience, Charity, Long-suffering, &c. we behold in them, we our selves (by God's Blessing) may be indued with. That we may be as they were in the World, sober and virtuous ; and may  
re-



resemble them in Grace, as we resemble them in Nature. That as by Nature we were born in their sinful Likeness; so by Grace we may be new born in their spiritual Likeness. This is what the Children of pious Parents should be principally ambitious of, and anxious for, because 'twill do them the most Good: And therefore, in all Reason, they should be more solicitous to inherit their Parents Virtues, than their Estates; because Grace will keep them in Favour with Heaven, and will sanctify their Possessions on Earth, and make them wear well, and last long; but the Want of it exposes Men to all Manner of Intemperance and Excess, both in Meats and Drinks, and in Apparel and Pleasures, which so often are attended with sad Consequences, such as Shame, Sorrow, Diseases, and Poverty, together with a short Life, and an uncomfortable Death.

And lastly, They teach us Love, Beneficence, and Kindness to all Men: *To love our Neighbour as our selves*, and to express it in affectionate Offices, and in a ready Inclination of Mind and Heart, to benefit and help him. *That we do Good to all Men, especially to the Household of Faith: That we do unto them as we would they should do unto us*, supposing our selves in their Circumstances, Gal. vi. 10. *That we be kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven us*, Eph. iv. 32. That we be not unmerciful, nor scornfully treat, nor make a Sport of the Wants of our Neigh-

## 56 Of Knowing the Scripture.

Neighbours, whose Condition in the World is mean, and their Necessities many; but to condescend to Men of low Estate, and to treat them with Humanity, Benignity, Tenderneſs, Compaſſion, and Charity: That *as the Elect of God we may put on Bowels of Mercy and Kindneſs towards them; and be ready to diſtribute, and willing to communicate to their Necessities*, and hereby evidence *that our Love is not in Word, but in Deed, and in Truth*. That we muſt not *render Evil for Evil*, nor proſecute our Enemies to revenge, but to forgive Injuries, though repeated to *ſeventy Times ſeven*. Saith our Saviour, *Love your Enemies; bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you*, Mat. v. 44. This is preſſed upon us as abſolutely neceſſary, and is an Argument we muſt uſe and plead with God in our Prayers, to obtain his forgiving Mercy for our ſelves; as our Saviour directs, *Mat. vi. 12. Forgive us our Debts, i. e. our Trefpaſſes, as we forgive them that trefpaſs againſt us*. According to which our Prayers for our own Remiſſion will meet with either a favourable and gracious Acceptance, or Rejection, as we be either diſpoſed or indiſpoſed, in the Temper of our Minds, to forgive our offending Brethren. Yea, we cannot, upon any ſolid Ground, hope for divine Forgiveneſs our ſelves, unleſs we actually forgive others, and in the Intention and Purpoſe of our Hearts and Minds, be reconciled to them. Saith our Lord, *If you*

*you forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but if you forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive you your Trespases, Mat. vi. 14, 15.* An unforgiving Temper renders Men incapable of Pardon, and fixes their Guilt upon them for ever. Now from these, and a great many more Particulars of the same Nature, which the holy Scriptures furnish us with, their Sufficiency is manifest. 'Tis true, not barely for laying down Rules of Perfection before us, but because the Spirit and Grace of God doth attend them, and make them sufficient to all the Purposes of Wisdom, Holiness, and eternal Life. Which concludes the Doctrinal Part, and brings us in the last Place, to the Conclusion and Application.

(1.) If the sure Way for Children to become *wise unto Salvation*, is to converse early and diligently with the Holy Scriptures ; then this Doctrine teacheth us, That to neglect and slight those sacred Writings, is to slight the Means of Knowledge, and virtually to continue ignorant of God, and the Way to Blessedness. For what can illuminate our Minds in those Matters, if we forsake the Guide of Youth ? What can remedy our Mistakes, and rectify our wrong Conceptions and Judgments, about the immortal and invisible World, and the Way to it, if we desert the Words of eternal Life ? 'Tis most certain the further we go from the Scriptures, the only Rule of Life, the greater is our Distance from Truth, the more obscure

## 58 Of Knowing the Scripture.

and faint are our Notions of it, and the more Danger we are in of falling into incurable Ignorance.

All the comfortable Light, the saving Knowledge, and Notices of spiritual Things, and spiritual Objects, which can be depended upon with Certainty, and which are necessary to make us wise unto Salvation, comes by Revelation. 'Tis true, the Light of Nature discovers the Being and Perfections of God, his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, in the Works of Creation and Providence; but how obscure, dark, and ineffectual these are in themselves to inform our Minds, and to reform our Hearts and Lives, and prepare us for Glory, let the Pagan World declare.

' And though these Works of Nature be every Way immense, and perfect, as all God's Works are, yet we may say with *Job*, *How small a Portion of God is heard of* by these alone? However, these Works are sufficient to render the Heathens inexcusable, and to cut off all Pleas and Apologies for their Idolatry, vain Imaginations, and abominable Practices, and for not worshipping the living and true God, according to the Light they had. The Heathens had the dim Light of Nature, the *Jews* the veiled Face of *Moses*; but we Christians have the holy Scriptures, the most blessed and glorious Discovery of Wisdom, Grace, and Goodness, the World ever enjoyed. 'Tis an incomparable Blessing. Our Saviour tells us, *Luke xiii. 17. That many Prophets*



*Prophets and righteous Men did desire to see those Things which you see, but did not see them; and to hear those Things which you hear, but did not hear them.* They are hid from them, but revealed to us. But then, though it be our Privilege and Happiness to enjoy such a Blessing as the Scriptures, yet if we slight them, and seldom or never converse with them, nor seriously meditate upon them, they will profit us nothing. For 'tis the Nature of Means, whether temporal or spiritual, to affect no otherwise than they are used. A sovereign Remedy we may have in our keeping for a malignant Distemper, but if it be either wholly neglected, or but very slightly used, it will be equally insignificant to the Purpose of a Cure. In like Manner, though the Bible, the only Book of Life in the World, be in our Houses or Closets, yet if it be laid by as a useless Piece of Antiquity, and very rarely look'd into and perused, in Order to acquaint our selves with it, to learn our Duty from it, and to be bettered by it, though it be ever so sufficient in it self, for all the Purposes of Wisdom, Grace and Life, yet our careless Neglect and Contempt of it, or slight and superficial Use of it, (*i. e.*) our using it as though we used it not, with a cold, careless, indisposed, and unwilling Mind, without that Regard, Reverence, Faith, and Affection, which such sublime and spiritual Mysteries require, will obstruct the Virtue of it, and render it void and ineffectual.

## 60 Of Knowing the Scripture.

(2.) Such as slight the Holy Scriptures, *which are able to make them wise unto Salvation*, do slight both their own Mercy, and endanger their own Salvation. If ever the dark, the miserable, and benighted World, has just Cause to boast of, and glory in any Thing, 'tis in the Mercy of Christ, and the Holy Scriptures: For these have produced a Day of benign and comfortable Light, and kind Influences, which by the tender Mercies of our God, do enliven, enlighten, animate, encourage, warm, and chear the Hearts of miserable Mankind.

These Holy Writings are an inestimable Treasure, and an invaluable Mercy. They are the Counsel and Will of God, concerning the Way to Glory; and discover the infinite Perfections of his Nature, which are manifested in our astonishing Redemption by Jesus Christ. They give us a clear Description and Representation of Man's Original and Fall, and the Deluge of Sin and Misery that did ensue. *By one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, and so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned*, Rom. v. 12. Now the whole World, like an Hospital, is full of sick, sinful, miserable, dying Men, languishing under the same Diseases and Calamities. Their Miseries are common, without Exception; as none are pure from Deformities, so none are excluded from Sorrows. *A Man that is born of a Woman, is of few Days, and full of Trouble*, Job xiv. 1. A short, frail Life,

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 61

Life, and many Miseries, with a certain Death, are the Inheritance of Mankind upon Earth. But all these Things, so bitter and grievous as they are, would no wise be insupportable, if they did end at Death: But we have sad Assurance from the Scriptures, that they are attended with eternal Misery and Dolors, to the finally impenitent and unbelieving; for they must die to their Well-being and Happiness for ever. As our Saviour declares, *He that believeth not shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abides upon him*, John iii. ult. And the Sacred Oracles assure us, That all those Evils and Calamities, together with Death temporal, spiritual and eternal, are no more than the just Wages, and Deserts of our Sins. The lively Sense of this must needs terrify Men, and the more so, because they cannot possibly, by any Doings or Sufferings of their own, either appease the Divine Justice they have provoked, or recover the Divine Favour they have lost.

But that miserable Men might not sink under the Weight and Burden of these Considerations, and utterly despond and despair of Mercy, the Scriptures discover our Remedy, and the Almighty Mercy that saves us, by our Redeemer Jesus Christ; *who puts away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself*; and gives *Pardon, Grace, and Eternal Life*, to all that do unfeignedly believe in him. Yea, those Holy Writings, as they discover to us God's wonderful Love in our Redemption; so they teach us how to abide in his Love, and what Course  
to

## 62 Of Knowing the Scripture.

to take, that the blessed Effects thereof might be our endless Enjoyment.

In a Word, they sweeten and moderate the most bitter and afflicting Things. The most sorrowful and bitter Article in Life, is Death. By Sin Death is become the Condition of our Natures; Die we must, the Decree is past and irreversible. *It is appointed unto all Men once to die*, Heb. ix. 27. And 'tis an awful Thing to die; to have the vital Bond of Life cut asunder; to be stripp'd naked, in a Moment, of all our beloved Delights and Enjoyments; and to be laid in the Dust with the Worms and Corruption, which will soon consume us.

This indeed, is bitter, distasteful, and odious to Flesh and Blood. But then, under all this, how sweet and pleasant is it to be assured, that though Death be unavoidable, though neither young nor old, rich nor poor, learned nor illiterate, be exempted from it, yet we are not lost by it, but shall rise again? God will not leave our Bodies in the Grave, *neither will he suffer his holy Ones to see Corruption. He will shew them the Path of Life*, and bring them *into his Presence, where are fulness of Joys, and Pleasures for evermore*. This Consideration so enlivened holy *David*, that he breaks out into a Flood of Joy, saying, *My Heart is glad, and my Glory rejoiceth, my Flesh also shall rest in Hope*, &c. Psal. xvi. 9, 10, 11. Christians die poor, weak, frail, miserable, and mortal Men, but they rise blessed and immortal Saints; they shall die no more;



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 63

more; *Death shall have no more Dominion over them.*

Now, what a singular Mercy is the Enjoyment of the Holy Scriptures, which brings such good Tidings to us, and lays the Promises of God before us, and fully assures us, that immortal Joy and Glory shall be the Inheritance of sincere penitent Believers? *Solomon* calls the Word of God by the Name of *Wisdom*, *Prov. i. 20. Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her Voice in the Streets.* She is said to cry with a loud Voice, to intimate, both God's Earnestness, in inviting Sinners to listen unto it, and to learn and receive Instruction from it; and their Inexcusableness if they flight and neglect it. Yea, this Wisdom expostulates with foolish Sinners, for the ill Treatment they give her, and the Repulses and mighty Provocations they offer her; and then cautions them to be wise, amend and turn, *Prov. i. 21, 22, 23. She uttereth her Voice, saying, how long ye simple Ones, will ye love simplicity, and the Scorners delight in their Scorings, and Fools hate Knowledge? Turn ye at my Reproof, behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my Words unto you.* How kind and gracious is this! She will forget and forgive all that is past, and bestow all that is promised, if Sinners will but return, and become wise and willing to learn Righteousness. But if they be obstinately bent upon their Follies, if nothing will gain them, nor induce them to attend unto sound Wisdom,

nor

## 64 Of Knowing the Scripture.

nor prevail with them to receive Instruction, then they bring upon themselves swift and sure Destruction, and they shall not escape. As Wisdom declares, *Prov. i. 24, 25, &c. Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my Hand and no Man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof, I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh. When your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind. When Distress and Anguish cometh upon you, then shall you call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but shall not find me.* Foolish Sinners, whose Hearts are fully set in them to do Mischief, are now stout and arrogant against God, they are fearless of his Power, and regardless of his Anger; they are wholly averse to his Ways in their Hearts and Minds: They despise his Threats, they slight his Promises, and set at naught all his Counsels: Yea, now they place themselves in the Scorners's Chair, and presume to censure the Ways and Works of God, and to reject with Scorn and Derision every Thing of him, which tends to the perfecting of their Beings and Nature; but the dismal Hour is approaching, even the fatal Juncture of Time, when they shall be both friendless and comfortless: *And Terrors shall come upon them, as Travail upon a Woman with Child, and they shall not escape.* When their Courage shall fail, their Complexion change, their  
Tongues

Tongues falter, and their Hearts shall melt and die away within them, for such dreadful Calamities will break out upon them, and with that irresistible Violence too, as shall fill them with the utmost Terror and Consternation; and shall awaken their Fears, and excite their Cries and Tears to Heaven for Mercy, but to no purpose; for now God will come up with them, and as a just Retribution, will, in his turn, *laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh.* They disowned God in their Prosperity, therefore are they forsaken by him in their Adversity. When Distress and Anguish cometh upon them, they shall call upon him but he will not answer, they shall seek him early but shall not find him.

(3.) This Doctrine also teacheth us, That there is no attaining this Wisdom, but by Diligence and God's Blessing. They are inseparably joined together, and there is no regular Hope but in their joint Concurrence. Inactive Desires, and lazy Wishes, will sooner intail Ignorance and Poverty upon us, than enrich us with Knowledge and Grace. Saith Solomon, *The Soul of the Sluggard desireth and hath not,* Prov. xiii. 4. Empty Desires are fruitless, no Promises are made to them, neither can we expect any good from them. 'Tis *the Hand of the Diligent that maketh rich.* Therefore St. Paul exhorts Timothy, *To give Attendance unto Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine. Neglect not the Gift that is in thee: Meditate upon these Things, give thy self wholly to them,*

## 66 Of Knowing the Scripture.

*that thy profiting may appear unto all,* 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14, 15. Vigorous and indefatigable Endeavours are the true Way, both to acquire and improve Knowledge: To expect it upon other Terms, is equally as vain, as to expect a Crop without either plowing or sowing our Ground, which with Men is absolutely impossible, and is no otherwise possible, than Miracles are possible with God. And though the Promises of God are *Yea and Amen*, and shall be infallibly performed, yet as they are connected with our Duty, they cannot ordinarily be obtained without it. This surely will admit of no doubt, if we consider the Substance and drift of the Scriptures, especially in the Matter before us. For though it be expressly said, that God giveth Wisdom liberally, and upbraideth not, yet a little Consideration will persuade us, that this is not to be understood exclusively of our Endeavours, but jointly with them. The sure Way to prevail with God to give, is to comply with him, to ask, *James i. 5. If any Man lack Wisdom, let him ask it of God.* And this asking undoubtedly includes in it, not only believing fervent Prayer, but also a diligent and affectionate use of all God's appointed Means, for the obtaining of it: That our Ears be attentive to his Word, our Hearts affected towards it, our Minds bent upon it, our Lives conformable to it, and that we daily, duly, and diligently read and search the Scriptures in the Pursuit thereof. As *Solomon* speaks, *Prov. ii. 2, 3, 4. Incline thine Ear unto Wisdom,*



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 67

*dom, and apply thine Heart unto Understanding. Cry after Knowledge, and lift up thy Voice for Understanding. Seek for her, as for Silver, and search for her as for hid Treasure.* Wisdom is a Treasure of inestimable Value, and is not obtained by a few, easy, idle, and slothful Wishes, but by vigorous Endeavours in the Way of Duty. Men are oftentimes rich by Donation, without any Toils and Cares of their own, but wise and virtuous they cannot be, without their own Industry, and much Labour and Travel. Children inherit their Parents Estates with ease, without any toilsome Labour and Weariness, but their Wisdom and Virtues are not possessed without Pains, Fatigue, and Diligence. Good Parents bequeath all that is in their Power (and that willingly too) to their Posterity; their Lands and Chattels they divide among them, but their Virtues can't be transferred; these will die with them, except by Diligence, and God's Blessing, they live in their Children. Though we descended from the Loins of faithful *Abraham* himself, or had the best and wisest Persons in the World, for our Parents, who do all they are capable of, to form us in their gracious Likeness: Yet we shall never attain it, if we be slothful, lazy, and disobedient Children: Children that are without Faith; who will not receive Instruction, nor improve the Opportunities and Advantages we enjoy, to better our selves, in order to grow up in all commendable Virtues. That we may be

## 68 Of Knowing the Scripture.

adding to our *Faith Patience, to Patience Temperance, to Temperance Godliness, to Godliness brotherly Kindness, and Charity*; and may have that Wisdom from above, *which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, that is full of Mercy, and of good Fruits, without Partiality and Hypocrisy*, Jam. iii. 17. These Things are the Fruits of God's Blessing, and our own Endeavours. Saith the Apostle, *Give Attention unto Reading. Use all Diligence, that thy profiting may appear unto all. And, Be not slothful, but Followers of those, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.*

But once more, this Doctrine also teacheth us, That the Holy Scriptures then only make us wise unto Salvation, when we cordially and sincerely believe them. If we fail in this, towards them, they will certainly fail in the Matters spoken of towards us. For if we believe not we must perish. 'Tis Faith puts Life in the Scriptures, gives Power and Efficacy to them, and makes them sufficient for our Salvation; but without this they are to us as dead Letters, lifeless, insipid, and impotent, that cannot warm the Heart, renew and sanctify the Affections, nor reform the Life. According as we believe or disbelieve the Scriptures, such will be their Influence and Efficacy upon our Souls and Consciences.

To them that believe they are precious, and sweet, and profitable, *a Savour of Life unto Life*; and do serve to all the Intents of Wisdom,

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 69

dom, Grace, and eternal Life, *and to pull down strong Holds, and to cast down Imaginations, and every high Thing that exalts it self against the Knowledge of God, and to bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5.* But to them that believe not they are pernicious and deadly, *a Saviour of Death unto Death*; sealing up and hardening Men to their everlasting Ruin. *Whosoever believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned.* Faith, as well as Holiness, is absolutely necessary in all, whether rich or poor, learned or illiterate, that would become *wise unto Salvation*, and be saved by Jesus Christ. It is made so by God's Decree and Appointment: Saith the Apostle, *God hath from the Beginning chosen you to Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth, 2 Thes. ii. 13.* Those, therefore, who disbelieve the Scriptures, the Records which God hath given us of himself, and his Ways, hath made him a Liar, and hereby infinitely provoked the high and holy One, and rendered themselves incapable of Blessedness. *He that believeth not shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.*

(2.) By Way of Motive and Argument. If Parental Instruction is requisite and necessary to produce the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures in our Children: Then let Parents engage early, readily, and heartily therein. And that upon this twofold Consideration.

(1.) Be-

## 70 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

(1.) Because God hath made it their Duty.

(2.) Because it is a Debt they owe their Children ; and Love and Affection should lead and constrain them to the Performance of it.

(1.) Consider God hath made it the Parents Duty, and bound it upon them to be early and diligent in teaching their Children the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures. However, this explicate Command of God, that limits and confines Parents to scriptural Instruction in particular, doth not exclude their Children from the Search and Enquiry after other Knowledge, as they have Opportunity, Inclination, and Ability, to fit and qualify them for their respective Callings and Functions in the World. It implies that the Knowledge of the Scriptures is the best for Quality, and the only Knowledge that is capable to make them wise unto Salvation. And, indeed, we need be no wiser than to know how to get to Heaven, and to escape eternal Destruction. Here the Goodness of God is to be admired and adored, for though Children be committed to the Care and Tuition of their Parents, and instructing Work in general, is a difficult Work, that requires Knowledge, Experience, Skill, Pains, and Patience, to carry it on with Success ; and the Generality of Christian Parents, under a Consciousness of their Weakness and Inability, may cry out, Lord, who is sufficient for this ? But then, though good Christians may be defective in, and come short of others, in Learning and acquired Knowledge, and may want that



that Skill and Experience in the Languages, which Men of Letters are invested with, yet this by no Means incapacitates them for the Duty God calls them unto.

For in this holy Discipline, which is necessary to make Children wise unto Salvation, God doth not impose an unreasonable Task upon Men; he requires no more of them than the least good Christian can (by his ordinary Assistance) perform. 'Tis true, if Parents were entirely left to themselves, and their own Conduct, to contrive Ways, and invent Means for this End, they must utterly despair of attaining it; for *no Man knows the Things of God, but by the Spirit of God.* No Man, by the most indefatigable Labour and Study, can trace out the Way to Blessedness, nor know how to make himself and his Children wise unto Salvation, but as it is revealed. And blessed be God so it is, and that plainly too. And that none may plead Ignorance as an Excuse for the Neglect of this Duty; I mean, that none might say, I know not how to teach my Children, nor what Counsel to give them, nor what Instruction to lay before them, nor what Course and Method to take with them for such a Purpose; God himself is pleased to interpose, and plainly and expressly tells them what they must do, in Order hereunto. And to prevent all Mistakes in a Matter of such Moment and Consequence as this, he fairly copies out their Duty in their own Language, and leaves it with them for their Directory, *Deut. vi. 6, 7.*

*All*

72      *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

*All these Words which I command thee this Day, shall be in thine Heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children: And shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy House, and when thou walkest by the Way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* The Matter of Instruction is the holy Scriptures, which, in Things necessary to Salvation, are plain, easy, and intelligible to the meanest Capacity. And he is a good Master, wise and skilful in the Words of eternal Life, and excellently qualified to teach his Children in this holy Language, who undertakes it with a willing Mind, and with an humble and believing Heart; and who is as careful to copy out the Precepts of the Scripture in his own Life, as he is to teach them his Children with his Mouth. And when Authority, Example, and Precept thus jointly concur in this good Work, what blessed Fruit may not Parents expect. Surely the Lives and Labours of such, by the Grace of God, will not be in vain. 'Tis an Honour God puts upon Parents, and the Heads of Families, in calling them in this Manner, to act as Priests in their own Houses, offering up spiritual *Sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is their reasonable Service.* God will have the Houses of Christians like little Schools and Temples, Nurseries of Knowledge and Virtue, sacred to himself, within the Walls of which, upon all proper Occasions, he requires a religious Worship, and a religious Education, to be maintained and carried on, between the Parents

rents and Children, and the Master and Family, with the greatest Seriousness and Diligence. Here Parents may see their Duty and Office, what God calls them unto, what he qualifies them for, and expressly requires of them. And to prevent all Discouragements herein, which may arise from the Consideration of Children's Stubbornness and Obstinacy, or their Indisposition and Aversion to good Discipline, God hath invested Parents with such Authority, and so guarded and secured them in the Discharge of their Duty, by a Law made in *Israel*, that no Sons of *Belial* can presume to violate, without the utmost Danger, *Exod. xxi. 17. He that curseth his Father or his Mother, shall surely be put to Death.* Yea, Children cannot so much as scorn and deride their Parents, though but in Looks or Gestures, without extreme Hazard of a violent and ignominious Death. *Prov. xxx. 17. The Eye that mocketh at his Father, and despiseth to obey his Mother, the Ravens of the Valley shall pick it out, and the young Eagle shall eat it.* Thus when Parents consider the Honour God puts upon them; the Authority he invests them with, and guards against Contempt and Scorn, by Statutes made in *Israel*: Yea, considering that their own Children cannot despise and contemn them, in the Exercise of their Duty and Office, without violating a sacred Ordinance, and exposing themselves to the utmost Danger. With what chearful and willing Minds, should they enter

## 74 Of Knowing the Scripture.

upon the good Work which God calls them unto, and requires of them; and which we are assured they cannot neglect without extreme Peril to themselves? For if it should come to pass, that their Children should be destroyed *for lack of Knowledge* (i. e.) if their Ignorance of God, their Enmity to his Ways, and their vicious and prophane Lives, which are the Cause of their Ruin, be through their Parents Default, through their Sloth, bad Example, and Neglect of Duty, they then equally involve themselves with their Children, in Ruin great and inevitable. What God saith to the Prophet, is virtually true of all Parents; he hath made them Watchmen over their Children, and they are to hear the Words of God's Mouth, and to teach them diligently unto their Children, in Season and out of Season. They are to give them Warnings of Sin and Death; and to admonish them in the Name, and by the Authority of the living God, to relinquish ungodly Courses, and ungodly Companions; to break off from their *Sin by Repentance*, and to be wise, and willing to learn Righteousness: But if they will not hear, nor learn, nor be perswaded, *they shall die in their Sins, but you have delivered your own Souls*. But if our Children die in their Iniquities, through our means; if they miscarry, either for indulging them in Idleness and Folly, or for not teaching and admonishing them in their Duty, then *their Blood will be required at our Hands*, Ezek. iii. 17, to 20. Sure and certain Punishments,  
from



from the righteous Judge of Heaven and Earth, will befall careless and slothful Parents, as well as wicked and undutiful Children. God will not dispense with the Neglect of this Duty, upon any Account, where there is Capacity, and the Childrens Condition requires it. Those Parents therefore, who do spend the whole Day in the Cares and Businesses of the World, and the Night in Pleasure, Sleep, and Idleness; who consume all their Time in Vanity and Folly, even that too, with the rest, which God commands to be redeemed and devoted to his Service, for their own and their Childrens Benefit, are foolish Prodigals, lavish of their Talents, and do spend more than God allows, and they can account for. Oh how sad and uncomfortable will such Mens Reckoning be at last! What Excuses will they be able to frame, when God shall enter into Judgment with them, for their Slothfulness, their wretched Abuse of Time, their Contempt of God, and the Word of his Grace, and the notorious Neglect of their Children? Or, what Apologies can they make in their own Defence, that shall be sufficient to avert their righteous Sentence? All they can alledge to justify their ungodly Conduct, will be insignificant; 'twill be without colour of Reason or Justice, a mere trifling with Words, which will rather swell and aggravate their Guilt, than extenuate it. God cannot be deceived, nor imposed upon, by fair or fine Words, nor prevailed with by any means to pass Sentence, but according to the

## 76 Of Knowing the Scripture.

true Merits of the Cause. *Those that have done well shall enter into Life, and those that have done Evil into eternal Condemnation, where the Wrath of God for ever abides upon them.* As we would therefore avoid the Fate of such slothful, wicked Men, and see good Days and good Children, let us shun their Practices, and engage heartily in our Christian Duty, and hereby honour God, that by his Blessing upon our Endeavours, the rising Generation may increase in Knowledge and Virtue, as they do in Years, and may be such, as shall seek and serve the Lord when we are dead and gone; that God may speak in Commendation of us, what he doth of *Abraham*, saying, *I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, to keep the Way of the Lord,* Gen. xviii. 19.

(2.) Parents should instruct their Children in the Holy Scriptures, because 'tis a Debt they owe them, and Love and Affection should lead, and constrain them to the Performance thereof. Parents are obliged, to the utmost of their Power, to seek the Good, and prevent the Evil of their Children, they are to use all due Means, and take due Pains and Care, that they be wise and holy, comfortable and useful here, and happy for ever. The lower Rank and Order of Creatures, by the bare Instinct of Nature, contrive the Safety, and labour for the Conveniencies of their young Ones. What admirable Art do the little Birds discover, and Pains take, in working their Nests, or building their Houses,

ses, and nursing their tender Brood, till they can shift for themselves? And if bare Nature, unassisted by any other Thing, prompts them to this; how much more shall Reason and Grace, supper-added to Nature, in Men, constrain them to regard their Children? Children are of a compounded Nature, or double Capacity, as they have Souls and Bodies, each of which have particular Concernments belonging to them, which Parents must mind, and be helpful and serviceable thereunto, upon all Occasions, as they have Opportunity and Ability. But then, as those Concernments are vastly different, in their Nature, Tendency, and Consequences: As one of them is infinitely more weighty and momentous than the other; as the Affairs of their Souls, and their final Happiness, do incomparably exceed those of their Bodies, so should Parents be sure to give them the Preference, both in their Esteem, Choice and Practice. It should be their early Care and Resolution (by the Grace of God) to do their best, and their utmost, to promote and further their dear Off-springs chief Good, and ultimate End. This, indeed, is a Work of that Importance and Necessity, that our Saviour will have us to neglect all other Matters, in comparison to it. *Mat. vi. 31, 33. Take no Thought, saying, what shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and all these Things shall be added thereunto.* If Parents  
be-

## 78 Of Knowing the Scripture.

begin betimes, if they be diligent and studious, to train up their tender Ones in the Ways of God ; if it be their principal Care to furnish them with Knowledge and Grace, that they may be meet for the Kingdom of God, there will be no want of necessary Provision. Saith the Psalmist, *God will give Grace and Glory, and no good Thing withhold from them that walk uprightly*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

(2.) Consider that the Condition and Necessities of your Children's tender Age doth claim, and call for your speedy Assistance and Instruction. They not only brought a sinful, corrupt Nature into the World with them, and continually carry it about them, which sticks closer to them than their Garments, and which too powerfully incline them to Sin and Folly, but they have also a raging Devil, and an enflaming World without, and round about them, to entice, delude, and destroy them: And so weak, ignorant and impotent, are they in themselves, that they have no Power nor Skill, either to cope, or contend with, much less to overcome those mighty Giants that are risen up against them, and do restlessly seek the Life of their Souls. This is their Condition, and a little Consideration will enforce this Acknowledgment, and fully convince you, that your Children cannot help themselves, Nature and Affection requires you to assist them, and this you must do, or in all probability they are lost. 'Tis true, Children, by reason of their Ignorance, and want of Experience, are not sensible



ble of their own Danger and Enemies. Poor Creatures, they little think what Snares and Baits, and Traps, are, in their tender Years, laid for them; and what furious Enemies do assault them, and lurk for their Ruin, from their Cradles. Their Condition doth certainly call for the same Compassion and Assistance *Job's* did in his great Distress: Have Pity upon me, O my Parents! Help Father, assist Mother, your infant helpless Child (now in imminent Danger of being shipwrack'd for ever) with your seasonable and interposing Counsel, Instruction, and Prayers, that I perish not.

The Care of their Bodies you chearfully undertake, and if your Abilities answer, you grudge them nothing (in any respect) that is conducive to their temporal Welfare and Advantage: For a graceful Carriage, for Skill in Languages, for Knowledge and Experience in Arts and Sciences, &c. which renders them accomplished Men, and qualifies them for the Business and Conversation of Men and Things in this World; yea, for rich and sumptuous Diet, Apparel, and Pleasure, you spare for nothing, but are rather lavish and profuse than niggardly. Now, you that expend so much to polish and deck the outward Man, the least and perishing part in your Children; how much more, if you have the Faith of Christians, and the Affection and Compassion of Parents, should it be your Concern to adorn their better Part, their immortal Souls, with Divine Knowledge and Grace?

This

## 80 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

This is the best and most valuable Furniture and Accomplishment they can possibly be endowed with, and all other Things should give way unto, and be postpon'd to it; and that for this Reason, because this of it self makes them wise unto Salvation; it procures them the Favour of God, it interests them in the Benefits of Jesus Christ, it fits them for Converse and Communion with him in this Life, and for his Enjoyment in the next. But without this, all natural, human or acquired Knowledge and Endowments, though of the first Magnitude, or largest Extent, will be insignificant to Blessedness; for should our Children, by Industry and Improvement, come to be ever so worldly wise; should they be ever so well versed and skilled in all the Arts and Ways of Reasoning well, and of getting and preserving a good Estate, yet if they be perfect Strangers to, and ignorant of the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto Salvation, they, and all their Knowledge, Wealth and Ingenuity, must perish together. Where then is the Piety and Prudence of those Parents, whose principal and sole Care is, to make their Children rich and great, without any regard to their being Holy and Good? And, who will at any rate purchase barren Curiosities to embellish their Bodies, when, at the same Time, by a supine Carelessness, they starve and impoverish their Souls? It would be accounted very unnatural and inhuman, in a Father or Mother, to suffer a Child, or so much as a Servant, to starve for want

want of Food ; but how much greater Cruelty and Barbarity must it be thought, to suffer a precious and immortal Soul (and one for whom Christ died) *to perish for lack of Knowledge*, and necessary Instruction. The Apostle *Paul* thinks no Language hard and bad enough for those, who neglect the temporal Welfare of their Families ; who either idle, and play away that Time, which by Labour they should improve for them, or else profusely waste and squander away their Substance in Pleasure and Vanity ; or, by a sordid, covetous Temper, withhold what is necessary for them. His Words are these, *He that provides not for his own, especially for those of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*, 1 Tim. v. 8. What then shall be said of them, who perfectly neglect their Children's Souls, and their final Happiness, who make no Provision for them, nor administer (either by Counsel, Precept, or Example) any Comfort to them, but by a sinful and cruel Indulgence, suffer them to continue ignorant of God, and the Way to Blessedness, and to live in the Commission of Sin, and corrupt Customs, unadmonished and uncorrected ? Parents should seriously consider, ' If  
' they take no Care and Pains to do their Children good, they must expect abundance of  
' Sorrow in seeing them bad ; for if they prove  
' Enemies to God through your Default, they  
' will not long be Friends to you ; for natural  
' Love often ends in unnatural Hatred ; for a

## 82 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

' wicked Man or Woman will not conscientiously be a good Son, nor a good Daughter. How just therefore is it with God, that that Son or Daughter, whom we do not desire, and endeavour to make Friends to him, should become Foes to us? And, that that Child whom we indulge in Sin, should in Time to come prove the greatest Grief of our Hearts; God suffering, to our Sorrow, him, or her, to rebel against us, whom we suffered and saw, without Sorrow, to rebel against him.' *If therefore, there be any Bowels of Pity, if any Compassion of Love, if any Kindness and tender Affections in our own Bosoms,* for the Souls of those God hath committed to our Care, and we are desirous to see good Days, and good Children, then let us early and heartily engage in the Work of Instruction; teaching them all those Things which God commands us; that by the Divine Blessing upon our Endeavours, we may have the Satisfaction to see them skilful in the Knowledge of Sacred Things, that they may so know the Scriptures, as to delight in them, to meditate upon them, to assent to them, and to regulate and govern their Lives and Practice by them. But once more,

(3.) Parents should consider, That they are not only to teach and instruct their Children well, but also to their utmost preserve them from Evil. Their Care of them doth not end with bare Instruction, but extends to every Branch of their Conversation. Parents are to rule



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 83

rule their Houses well, and to keep their Children in Subjection with all Gravity. They are to govern them with a grave, a mild, a discreet, and engaging Behaviour; with a Behaviour becoming Christian Parents, such as shall argue Affection and good Will towards them, and expresse a Desire to profit them, and be apt to gain Attention and Obedience. Saith God to the *Israelites*, *Ye shall command your Children to observe to do all the Words of this Law*, Deut. xxxii. 46. And saith the Apostle, *Children obey your Parents in all Things*, (i. e.) in whatsoever is agreeable to the Mind and Will of the Supreme Governor of Heaven and Earth, Col. iii. 10. Now, as parental Authority extends thus far, they are obliged to exercise it, for this weighty Reason, among others, because *'tis their Life*. Saith Moses, Deut. xxxii. 46, 47. *'Tis not a vain Thing for you, to command your Children to observe to do all the Words of this Law: For 'tis your Life*. As therefore, Parents are desirous to live and be happy themselves, and to principle the Minds and Hearts of their Children with good and gracious Qualifications, and to see the Work of Instruction to prosper with them; let them take care there be no Obstruction offer'd hereunto by their Companions. The Company Children ordinarily keep and converse with, as they be either virtuous or vicious, such will be the Influence of Instructions upon them: Good Companions will be no Hindrance unto, but rather Encouragers of, and Contributors

## 84 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

to forward, advance, and make them effectual. But bad Companions will obstruct, and render them void and uselefs; because Children are more ready to be governed by Example than Precept.

And you should consider, that Children who descend from the Loins of the best Parents, have a corrupt Quality in them, derived from guilty *Adam*, the Parent of all our Miseries, which renders them susceptible of vicious Impressions, and makes them liable to be easily corrupted. This Consideration should awaken in Parents, a due Concern to fortify and guard their tender young Ones, against an Evil so dangerous and threatening; not only by teaching them well, and admonishing them daily, but likewise by taking care what Company they keep, what Language they learn, and what Customs they imbibe. This should not be thought beneath the Notice of a wise Man, but rather a piece of good Prudence, which if well managed, will prevent abundance of Mischief; for how often, under the Colour of innocent Diversion, is maintained, by some wicked Children, a criminal Conversation, by their poisonous Breath, and enticing Example, they endanger the most virtuous and innocent among them. Vice is infectious, and therefore it should be artfully concealed, and kept at a distance from Children: The less foul, obscene, and prophane Language they hear, and corrupt and vicious Practices they see, so much the better: And the most effectual

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 85

al Way (under God) to bring this to pass, is to preserve them from bad Company. But if this part of the Parents Care and Duty be neglected; and by that means, the Children who are incapable to chuse for themselves, should by Accident contract Acquaintance with bad Company, in whom they see every Thing that is bad, and from whom they hear nothing that is good; and who by their Language and Example are perpetually tempting them to Sin, and sinful Diversions, without a Miracle of Grace, the Contagion will reach and infect them. And this is not to be wonder'd at, because the vicious Quality inherent in Mankind, makes them prone to that which is Evil, and averse to that which is Good. Children who have the Advantage to hear the best Lectures of Divinity read unto them, and the best Example set before them, yet by the Tendency of the corrupt Principle within, and the Influence of bad Company without, they will sooner be induced to the Love and Practice of Vice than of Virtue.

This corrupt Quality in Children makes them naturally affect Ease, Folly, Sin, Pleasure, and Idleness: They run into them by Inclination; and what under Heaven can possibly check and stop them in their Course, and reclaim them, when with Inclination is joined the Prevalency of corrupt Customs from bad Company? *He that walks with wise Men shall be wise; but a Companion of Fools shall be destroyed,* Prov. xiii. 20. According to the good  
or

## 86 Of Knowing the Scripture.

or bad Qualities of the Company Children ordinarily keep, are intimate with, and delight in, such will be their Influence upon them, either for their Good and Benefit, or their Hurt and Detriment.

The Way of Vice and Pleasure is smooth, level, broad, pleasant and desireable to corrupt Nature; 'tis grateful to Flesh and Blood, and agreeable and pleasing to sensual Desires and Affection: 'Tis a Way that is neither straitened for Room, nor destitute of Company, nor void of Mirth and Jollity, no, nor barren of any Thing that serves either to feed and flatter, or to entice and please Men's sensitive Appetites. Saith our blessed Saviour, *It is broad, and many there be that walk in it,* Mat. vii. 13. Much Company, and much Space, and Pleasures too without Bounds and Limits, are met with, and found there. There, according to the Apostle, *Lasciviousness, Lusts, Excess of Wine, Revellings, Banquetings, luxurious Feastings, and all Intemperance, and abominable Idolatry,* are tolerated and practised, as though the most commendable Virtues. And this pleasant, jovial Way, is so delightfome and satisfying to the Ungodly, that they highly wonder any should be shy of it, or deny themselves the Pleasures and Contentments of it. Saith St. Peter, *1 Epist. iv. 3, 4. They think it strange, that you run not with them to the same Excess of Riot, speaking Evil of you.*

But



But on the other Hand consider, The Way to Wisdom and Virtue is narrow, craggy, steep, and of difficult Ascent, and but few Companions you'll find therein ; and nothing at all that is gratifying to Flesh and Blood. Neither Children nor Men can walk in this Way, but upon the most strict and self-denying Terms, without *denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present World,* Titus ii. 12. In this Way no Progress can be made, nor Proficiency attained, but by Labour, Diligence, Patience, and Perseverance ; in Opposition to all Sloth, Idleness, Impatience, and Weariness. True Wisdom, like Treasure in the Earth, is deep and difficult to come at ; we must therefore dig and labour, as well as cry and pray for it, or 'tis in vain to expect it. The Terms by which we attain this Blessing, are set down by Solomon, in Prov. ii. 1, to 5. *My Son, if thou wilt receive my Words, and hide my Commandments with thee ; so that thou incline thine Ear unto Wisdom, and apply thine Heart unto Understanding : If thou cryest after Knowledge, and liftest up thy Voice for Understanding : If thou seekest her as Silver, and searchest for her as for hidden Treasure : Then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God.*

The Treasure of Wisdom is not gotten by lazy Wishes and slothful Desires, but by diligent and vigorous Endeavours. He that will be wise unto Salvation must steadily and constantly

## 88      *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

stantly devote himself to the Study, the Meditation, and Practice of the Holy Scriptures, without fainting. And how averſe Mankind in general are by Nature, to this Way of Labour and Diligence, is too evident, by the extream Difficulty there is to perſwade them to come into it. For though it be the only Way to be wiſe and happy, and of the vaſteſt Importance to themſelves, and their Souls for ever, yet they have no Hearts to attend it. They look upon it as a dull, moroſe, and melancholy Way ; as a Way of no Pleaſure nor Profit, nor at all to be deſired ; therefore they diſlike it : They ſhun it as though hurtful and dangerous, they argue againſt it, they ſcorn and deride it, and in Token of Contempt they avoid it, they paſs not by it, they turn from it, and paſs away.

Yea, how often is it found (and the more is the Pity) that thoſe very Children who have entred early into the Chriſtian Race, or School of Chriſt, under the Care and Conduct of religious Parents, who have expreſſed their good Liking of it, have been zealouſly affected towards it, in Appearance have made conſiderable Progreſs in it, and have given encouraging Hopes of an undisguiſed Sincerity ; yet after all, to the Amazement of Mankind, by the pernicious Influence of bad Company, have grown ſick and weary of it, have had the Edge of their Affections blunted towards it, and taken off from it, their Paſſions excited againſt it, and all the good Impreſſions of it,  
together

together with their blooming Hopes have been defaced and extinguished.

The Defection, or falling away of such Children, is a sore Affliction to good Parents, it troubles their Bowels, and disquiets their Souls, and makes their Sorrows and Concerns great and unspeakable. And how can it otherwise choose! when it presages inevitable Ruin to them, and plainly tells us, as well as the Language of bad Actions can do, that the Fruit of all our Labours and Travail we have expended upon them, is likely to be reaped by a Stranger, an Adversary, the worst of Adversaries, the Devil himself, who goeth up and down the World *like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Peter v. 8. How can such Parents forbear lamenting with the Prophet! *Oh that mine Head were Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I may weep Day and Night, for the Destruction of the Daughter of my People*, Jer. ix. 1. No number of Tears are sufficient to bewail such Childrens Condition, which will issue in certain and eternal Misery, if divine Mercy and Goodness interpose not. Oh that Children in general would seriously consider, there is no sporting nor trifling with Holy Things; no playing at fast and loose with God! If you forsake God, God will forsake you; and the Consequence thereof will be exceeding bitter and terrible. Read *Jer. ii. 19.* and tremble; *Thine own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy Backsliding shall reprove thee; know therefore and see, that it*

90 Of Knowing the Scripture.

*is an evil Thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my Fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

Now from these Considerations, how much doth it concern religious Parents, as they are willing to have their Children good; and to escape evil, not only to instruct them well, to read good Lessons to them, to set a good Example before them, and to lay their Commands upon them; but also, in a particular Manner, to have their Eyes upon them, and to regard their Conversation, and see that their Company and Acquaintance be every way suitable to the Education you give them, and the Hopes you conceive of them; lest by too great Indulgence towards them, in this respect, or a faulty Connivance at them, they should, for want of Judgment, fall into, and grow fond of vicious Society, who will gradually unweave the Work you have wrought; unteach them what you have taught; and push them upon such ruinous Courses, and fatal Precipices, as will unquestionably endanger their Morals and Comforts here, and their Souls for ever? But alas! sensible I am, that though you be ever so faithful and diligent, in fulfilling the Law of your Duty, yet all will issue in Disappointment, without the Divine Assistance and Blessing. And therefore, to your other Endeavours, add humble and fervent Prayers, that the God of Wisdom and Goodness, would be pleased to send down his Holy Spirit among you, to join and concur with you in teaching your Children,



dren, that by his gracious Influences upon their Hearts and Minds, the Work may be carried on with Vigor, and prosper; the Obstacles and Prejudices in the Way of it removed, their Proficiency evident; and to your Souls Content and Satisfaction, the Marks of Wisdom and Piety may be impressed upon them, and grow up more and more with them, and be visibly manifest in their Lives and Conversation.

But, lastly, To young Ones who are entred into the School of Christ, and are Candidates for Glory; be ambitious of, and zealously endeavour, to obtain that Commendation which the Apostle gave *Timothy* in the Text, that from Childhood you may know the Holy Scriptures, *which are able to make you wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Jesus Christ.*

For this End receive Instruction readily and thankfully, weigh it seriously, and improve it diligently. Listen to the Words of *Wisdom* attentively, *Hear as for your Life*, because from thence are the Issues of Life and Death. Who will give a careless Ear, be unattentive, or ludicrous, upon his Trial of Life and Death? By pious Instruction, God and Men are freely, friendly, and seriously too, debating the Case with you (God as Principal, Men as Instruments) not out of Interest to themselves, but purely for your own Advantage: for be you ever so wise and holy, yet what do you give God? Or, what receiveth he at your Hand? The Benefit and Advantages are wholly your own.

## 92 Of Knowing the Scripture.

However, God and Men plainly and compassionately tell you your true State and Condition by Nature and Practice; that your Faculties and Powers are depraved, and your Hearts and Lives corrupt and sinful; that though your Years be few, yet your Sins be many; and that, by the Temptations of the Devil, a vain World, and a vainer Heart, you have contracted much Guilt, and by virtue of it, are equally involved with the rest of Mankind, in all Miseries and Calamities, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, and that you need a Remedy as much as any. Now the Goodness of God, and Kindness of Parents, in instructing you, are to help and lead you to this Remedy; that you may reap the Benefits of it, and live for ever. Saith God, *Hearken unto me, keep sound Wisdom and Discretion, and they shall be Life unto thy Soul, and Grace unto thy Neck*, Prov. iii. 21, 22. So again, *Prov. iv. 4. Let thine Heart retain my Words, keep my Commandments and live.* Which plainly intimates these two Things.

(1.) That Life is only attained by regarding the Words of Wisdom. And,

(2.) That to reject the Words of Wisdom, or the Holy Scriptures, is to reject Life with them, and to fall under a Necessity of perishing eternally. For to reject the Holy Scriptures is virtually the same, as to deny, and be ashamed of Christ and his Words, than which nothing is more destructive, as you may learn from our Saviour, *Mat. x. 33.* and *Mark viii. 38.*

*Who-*

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 93

*Whoſoever ſhall deny, and be aſhamed of me, and of my Words, in this adulterous and ſinful Generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels.* 'Tis a moſt certain Truth, and which all Children, as well as Men, who are finally ungodly and unbelieving, will find verified to their woful Experience at laſt. Such as be ſo unwiſe and wicked, as to deal falſely and unfaithfully with Chriſt and his Words in this Life, he will treat them after the ſame manner in the next; and to their eternal Shame and Confuſion, expoſe them to the Scorn, Contempt, and Deriſion of God, Angels and Men. Now, you cannot but know, if you know any Thing of God, and religious Matters, that the Diſpleaſure of Chriſt, and his high Indignation, are the worſt and greateſt of Evils, that poſſibly can attend you; for in them are included your Loſs of God and endleſs Happineſs, therefore carefully avoid them, and all ſuch Company and Courſes, as will unavoidably bring them upon you. And conſider, ſhould you prove ſo obſtinately reſolute (which God forbid) as to perſiſt in rejecting, and denying the Words of Wiſdom, in ſpite of all Counſel, Inſtruction, and Admonition, what will be the Event? Nothing elſe, you may depend upon it, but gratifying Satan in your own Deſtruction. Wretched Children! infatuated and mad! What elſe muſt you be; if at ſo dear a rate you pleaſe and gratify ſuch an infernal Fiend,  
the

## 94 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

the principal Adversary of your Souls and Salvation?

Methinks this Consideration should awaken all Children, and especially those who have had the most tender and delicate Training up, and most advantagious Education, from indulgent Parents, who (for the most part) as they have Ability, think nothing too dear, too much, nor too good, for their Children; who in reason, allow them all the Ease, the Comfort, the Pleasure, the Encouragement, and Satisfaction, their Estates and Company can yield, and will suffer none to injure them. How can such Children, without the greatest Passion of Mind; think of exchanging all these Things for the most deplorable Condition? For a Condition that is miserable beyond Expression; and for Company, that will perpetually insult and tyrannize over them. To endure Hardship, Wants, Injuries, and Troubles, under the Prospect and Hopes of Relief and Deliverance, is Christian like, and tolerable. But to pass from a State of Ease, of Plenty and Pleasure, into a Condition of endless Wants and Woes, where our Pangs and Dolors will be without Ease, and without End; this is terrible and intolerable, and no Considerations whatsoever can assuage or allay it.

For should Children be so vain as to flatter themselves, that because they descended from the Loins of rich and good Parents, and had greater Advantages, a better and more liberal Education, and a more plentiful Allow-  
ance



ance to encourage and support them in their Labour and Studies ; and have better natural and acquired Accomplishments, than the mean-born, the rude, the vulgar, the illiterate, and uncultivated, that therefore they shall fare better, and be treated with more Mildness, Lenity, and Clemency in the other World, than they ; they are mightily mistaken : For the greater our Benefits, Privileges, and Advantages be in this Life, if we use them illy, or abuse them, the greater will be our Torments in the next. Saith the Holy Ghost, *How much she hath glorified her self, and lived deliciously ; so much Torment and Sorrow give her,* Rev. xviii. 7. And to the same Purpose, saith our blessed Lord, *Mat. xi. 23, 24. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell ; for if the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been in Sodom, it would have remained unto this Day. But it shall be more tolerable for Sodom, in the Day of Judgment, than for thee.* Neither will it be a Mitigation of their Miseries to think upon their Parent's Happiness : Yea, was it real what is represented in the Parable, that the miserable Spirits in Hell were in Sight of the triumphant State, and could behold their godly Parents in the Kingdom of Heaven, with their holy and dutiful Children in their Bosom, and remembring their Love, their Care, their Kindness and Liberality to them in this Life, might now also hope for some Relief in their Extremity, but  
twill

## 96 Of Knowing the Scripture.

'twill be in vain. For though, like *Dives*, they should importune and beg it in the most moving and pitiful Manner, saying, Good Father *Abraham* look upon us, and behold the desperate and forlorn Condition of us, thy unhappy Children ; unhappy for being undutiful to thee, and disobedient to our Lord and Maker. Once we would not hear, nor learn, nor believe, nor be perswaded, though mightily importuned thereunto. Counsel, Instruction, Prayers, and Warnings, were all lost upon us ; for we set them at naught, and despised them, and obstinately refused Mercy. But alas ! now too late we are convinced, now we see our youthful Follies, and smart for them : And now our Anguish is great, beyond Conception ; and our Torments intolerable, because they are eternal. Yet so miserable as we have made our selves, we would be glad of, and accept as a Favour, any little Thing, that shall assuage our Dolours but a Moment. *Send thy Son Lazarus, to dip the Tip of his Finger in Water, to cool our Tongues, for we are tormented in this Flame.* *Abraham* returns them this Answer, *Sons, remember that you in your Life-time received your good Things, and likewise Lazarus his evil Things ; but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great Gulf fixed : So that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.* Which Answer of holy *Abraham* gives us to understand,

stand, that the State of the damned is unalterably fixed. 'Tis a deplorable State, without Ease, without Comfort, and without End, *Luke xvi. 24, 25, 26.* Now from these Considerations, how much is it Children's Interest to regard Instructions, to receive them thankfully, and to bless God for them heartily? That by the Blessing of the All-Mighty and All-Merciful God, they may obtain that Character and Commendation the Apostle gave *Timothy* in our Text; *That from Childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Jesus Christ.* And to this End,

(2.) Improve your Instructions early and diligently. Begin betimes, with a willing Mind, and a teachable Heart: Be ready to hear and receive, and apt and forward to learn and retain good Instructions, that the Marks and Impressions of them may be deep upon you, and dwell continually with you. Shew no Dislike to the Work of Instruction, either by Impatience, or growing weary under it, nor frame any Excuses from your tender Years, to induce you to decline and neglect it. 'Tis your unquestionable Duty: God himself, as well as your dear Parents (by his Authority) calls for it, and requires it; *Eccl. xii. 1. Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.* By which Words 'tis  
O
evident,

## 98 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

evident, God would have young ones know and consider what a special Season and Opportunity they have, to provide for their Comfort and Safety for the present, and to guard and secure themselves against Evils to come. In this favourable Juncture, all Things are promising, and every Thing conspires to a happy Issue. Now the Father doth call and wait, the Son invites and offers, and the Holy Ghost doth strive and convince; and good Parents, and Ministers likewise, by their Lives and Labours do concur hereunto, as Instruments to so blessed a Work. Now, under all these Advantages, what considerable Progress might Children make, and Benefits reap, if they have Hearts and Wisdom to improve them? 'Tis Children's highest Interest and Duty, to answer God's Calls, and chearfully comply (without Reluctancy) with the first Intimations of the Divine Will. Whenever the All-Mighty condescends to call, we should readily and submissively answer; with young *Samuel, Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth*, 1 Sam. iii. 10. And when we understand his Pleasure we should not demur, but make Haste to do it; and with zealous Affections give him the First-Fruits of our Time and Strength: Which is an acceptable Sacrifice, pleasing to him, and profitable to our selves. Youth surely is the accepted Time, and the Day of Salvation; at this Season we may enter the School of Christ, or the Christian Race with Advantage, and by the Help of  
God,



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 99

God, be laying up in Store a good Foundation against the Time to come. Yea, this is the proper and best Season for Proficiency, for furnishing our selves with, and laying up a Stock of Knowledge, Experience, and Grace, against the evil Days; before *the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars, be darkened*; and all the Comforts and Joys of Life be fled and gone.

(2.) Let your Improvement bear some Proportion, and be suitable to the Advantages you enjoy. You who are under the Discipline and Guidance of religious Parents and Masters, and have not only the Benefit of publick Instructions and Prayers, but do also live in those Houses, where the Worship of God is continually kept up and maintained with sincere and zealous Affections, and with a devout and decent Behaviour, may be truly said to *be watching daily at Wisdom's Gates, and waiting at the Posts of her Doors*, Prov. viii. 34. You have *Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept*; every Day you have Experience of something or other that is instructing: The Practice of Wisdom is set before your Eyes, and recommended by a good Example, and the Precepts of it are explain'd and repeated in your Ears, for your Edification.

Answer, therefore, the End of such an Education, by loving God unfeignedly, by serving him faithfully and diligently, and believing him sincerely and truly; *that your Profiting may appear unto all Men*, and may testify that you are *wise unto Salvation*. Said a Heathen

## 100 Of Knowing the Scripture.

to his Son, *Marce Fili, oportet te, jam audientem Cratippum Annum, &c.* ' Son Mark, ' it behoveth thee, having already heard *Cratippus* a Year, and that at *Athens*, to abound ' with Precepts and Institutions of Philosophy, ' for the very great Authority both of the ' Master and the City ; whereof one can store ' thee with Knowledge, the other with Examples.' If such a Man expected so considerable Improvement from a Son, for the Advantage of a liberal Education, under such a Master, and in such a Place, in so short a Time ; What Progress then may not pious Parents expect from their Children, who have lived all their Days in the School of Christ, and have had Wisdom her self for their Guide, and Holiness for their Pattern and Example ? Who, in Truth, have had the very best of Precepts and Institutions in the World, perpetually read unto them, and pressed upon, and lived before them.

If such Children miscarry, and disappoint our Expectations : If they prove foolish, unwise, and wicked, in the midst of such plentiful Means of Knowledge ; and instead of obtaining that Wisdom from above, which is pure and peaceable, the blessed Fruit of learning the Truth as it is in Jesus ; they have only gotten the Wisdom that is *earthly, sensual, and devilish*, as the Apostle calls it, they have (by the Influence of fordid Lusts and Corruption) wretchedly wasted and squandered away their Time, and abused and perverted their Talents ;  
they

they have took Pains to a miserable Purpose, and made a sorry Purchase, which they had ten Thousand times better be without, than with, at any Time, because of the dismal Consequences thereof. 'Tis a severe Reflection of the Apostle upon such, in 1 *Tim.* iii. 7, 8. *Ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth. For as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the Truth: Children of corrupt Minds, and Reprobate concerning the Faith.*

And what greater Marks of Reprobation can appear, either in Children or Men, than to see them with Fury resist the Truth, to deride and scorn it, to live in Contempt of it, to be obstinate and unbelieving under it, to be hardened by it, and become the worse for it? God's Truth is most Dear and Sacred to himself, and can neither be slighted nor violated, without the utmost Danger. He that sets it at naught, or hardeneth his Neck against it, *shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without Remedy*, Prov. xxix. 1. To escape this, *fly to the Refuge that is before you*, and in good earnest apply your selves to the Work of Instruction: *Give Attendance unto Reading, Exhortation, and Doctrine. Neglect not the Gift that is in you.*

Let not a lazy, slothful Spirit, nor a cold Indifference, clog your Motion in the Pursuit of these Things, nor bereave you of the Benefits of them. Let the Rudiments or Principles of this heavenly Literature (our Text speaks

## 102 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

speaks of) which you are learning, be seriously minded by you, dwell with you, and grow up daily more and more towards Perfection, that by sensible Steps you may increase in every Part of it, and be hourly adding to *your Faith Virtue, to Virtue Temperance, to Temperance Patience, to Patience Godliness, to Godliness brotherly Kindness, and Charity.* That in due Time you may be perfect Men in Christ, *thoroughly furnished unto all good Works,* 2 Tim. iii. 17. 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. 'Twas the Character of the noble *Bereans*, that they received the Word with all readiness of Mind, and *searched the Scriptures daily,* Acts xvii. 11. This Example you should follow and imitate; and the more exactly you copy after them, the more you resemble them; and the more you resemble them in the Manner of their Practice, the more you shall share with them in their Praise and Commendation.

Give me leave to make use of one or two Motives, or Considerations, to persuade you (if God will vouchsafe his Blessing) to engage in the Study and Practice of the Holy Scriptures.

(1.) Consider the Excellency of them.

(2.) The Advantages.

(1.) The Excellency of the Holy Scriptures is a singular Motive, to induce you to devote your selves to the Study and Practice of them. True Excellence, either in Persons or Things, is a most commendable and praiseworthy Quality, to recommend them to our  
Choice



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 103

Choice and Esteem, and to endear them to our Affections. Now the highest Excellence is the Pattern of all the rest, and the nearer Men or Things come unto, or resemble this, the more excellent and admirable they are. Thus the excellent Wisdom of *Solomon* is set forth by Comparifon, *My Lord is wife according to the Wisdom of an Angel of God*, 2 Sam. xiv. 20. And the excellent Piety of *David* is illustrated, by his *being a Man after God's own Heart, and doing that which was right in the Eyes of the Lord, and turning not aside from any Thing he commanded him, all the Days of his Life, save only in the Matter of Uriah the Hittite*, 1 Kings xv. 5. But the Excellence of these Mens Wisdom and Piety comes vastly short of the Holy Scriptures; theirs is no more than a comparative, impure, and imperfect one, it is mixed with Folly, Deceit and Sin; but the Excellence of the Scriptures is perfect and complete, wanting nothing; it hath no Flaws nor Defects in it, nor Dross nor Fraud, nor Impurity, nor Uncertainty, adhering to it, nor any Thing whatsoever, to darken and obscure the Lustre of it. *The Words of the Lord are pure Words, as Silver tried in a Furnace of Earth purified seven Times*, Psal. lxxii. 6. *All the Words of my Mouth are in Righteousness, there is nothing froward nor perverse in them*, Prov. viii. 8.

Now the eminent Excellence of the Holy Scriptures consist, in the Majesty and Sublimity of their Stile, in their inimitable Sense, in the  
Depth

## 104 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

Depth of their Mysteries, and Extent of their Influence and Efficacy; and in the Truth, the Purity, the Importance, the Necessity, the Perfection, the Sacredness, and Certainty, of their Doctrines, whether they be Matters of Duty, or Promises; or of Threats, or Punishments. They derived from Heaven, the Fountain of Wisdom and Truth: *They are the Words of Eternal Life*; and do bare the Marks and Signatures of a Divine Author and Original. And 'tis an endearing Consideration, that these Sacred Writings are the Language of Heaven, sent down from thence to form our Minds, and to reform and perfect our Language and Manners, that we might think, and speak, and walk, every way suitable to the Profession of our High and Holy Calling upon Earth, and be eminently fitted and qualified for the Conversation and Enjoyment of the Society in Heaven. How much then doth it concern young and old, to learn this holy Language, the Language of *Canaan*, that they may understand it, and speak it, and delight in it, and experience the Benefits of it upon all Occasions.

'Tis the only Divine Language in the whole World, and so absolutely necessary to Salvation, in all that are capable of believing, understanding, and speaking it, that those who are ignorant of its Laws and Duties, and live in Contradiction to them, and speak in a Dialect different from them, are excluded the heavenly Inheritance. For nothing taketh Possession of that which worketh Abomination: Profane Swear-

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 105

Swearing, and Lying, and Blasphemy, with all the Impurities and Vices of the Tongue, are equally destructive with those of the Heart and Life. The Holy Ghost doth usually rank the Vices of the Tongue among the worst Actions of Mens Lives, and the most inordinate Passions of their Hearts. *Out of the Heart*, saith our Saviour, *proceeds evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, false Witnesses, evil Speaking, Blasphemies*, Mat. xv. 19. And St. Paul ranks Backbiters with Fornicators, and Murderers, and Haters of God; and with those, of whom it is expressly said, *They shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*, Rom. i. 29, 30. 1 Cor. vi. 10. So the Thief and the False-Swearer are joined together by the Prophet *Zechariah*, chap. v. 3, 4. where he assures us, *The Curse shall come upon them, and they shall be cut off*. So in like manner, Liars are ranked among the Fearful, the Unbelieving, the Abominable, the Murderers, the Whoremongers, the Sorcerers, and Idolaters, who have their Parts *in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death*, Rev. xxi. 8. Now, what a Motive is the Sense of these Things, to quicken and animate every one to pursue with Vigour the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, *which are able to make us wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is Jesus Christ*? And especially, when we consider likewise, that this World is the School, or proper Place, to acquire this Knowledge. If therefore we play and idle

## 106 Of Knowing the Scripture.

away the Time of Life, that is allotted us for this Purpose, and at last die ignorant of it, and Strangers to it, we are then lost for ever; because there is no retrieving lost Time, nor recovering lost Moments beyond Death, though with *Esau*, we should earnestly seek them with Tears. *There is no Work, nor Device, nor Wisdom, nor Knowledge, in the Grave.* As soon as ever we are dead to this World we are past all Discipline and Instruction; our Time of Learning and Improvement is elapsed, the Means are ended, the School is shut up, no more Lessons will be read to us, nor any Opportunity used with us. Our Tutors and Guides have done their Duty; they have done their best, and utmost, both by Precept and Example; they have prayed and argued, and rebuked, and exhorted, *with all Long-suffering and Doctrine.* They have done all that reasonable Men, good Christians, and pious, loving Parents, could possibly do, to make us wise unto Salvation; but we were deaf, and obstinate, to all their Counsels and Prayers, we would not hear, nor learn, nor be persuaded; we stubbornly resisted them, in their Offices of Love to our Souls. We looked upon them as Men that mocked, and were unreasonably troublesome, and superstitious; we regarded their Admonitions and Prayers no more than the Fruit of blind Zeal, tending to make us Melancholly, and to divert us from better Company. Thus have we frustrated all their kind Attempts for our Good, and behold! now  
our



our Destruction (which we had often Warnings of) is come upon us as a Whirlwind, and we shall not escape. 'Twas a heavy Charge that the Holy Ghost brought in against *Jezebel*. *I gave her space to repent of her Fornication, but she repented not.* This, to be sure, is an unspeakable bitter Ingredient in her Torments, and doth mightily exasperate them, *Rev. ii. 21.* And, how will it increase and aggravate foolish Sinners gnashing of their Teeth in Hell, when they reflect upon God's gracious Dealings towards them, in not only affording them Space, but also in using Importunities with them to receive his Counsel and Instruction, but they would not? Oh that we! who are yet in the Land of the Living, in the School of Probation, where we have Space and Opportunity, Tutors and Governors, and Precepts and Examples in abundance before us, to lead and allure us to the Love, the Study, the Belief and Practice of the Holy Scriptures, may be so wise (now at last) as to attend seriously to them, and diligently improve them; that this sorrowful Reflexion might never prove our Affliction, that once we had a Prize put into our Hands, but had no Hearts to improve it. Let the Excellence of the Sacred Writings, which is great beyond Conception, and renders them infinitely valuable and precious, be an Argument to recommend them to our Esteem, to endear them to our Souls, and to quicken us so to husband our Time, in the Pursuit of the Knowledge of them, that by God's

## 108 Of Knowing the Scripture.

Blessing, we may come to be savingly enlightened in them, and be made wise unto Salvation by them.

(2.) Let us consider the Advantages of the Holy Scriptures. These are exceeding great and many, and are suited to our twofold State.

(1.) To our inward and spiritual State.

(2.) To our outward and temporal One.

(1.) They are very commodious and profitable to our inward and spiritual State, to our Souls, for 'tis by their Means they be polished and adorn'd, and enriched and furnished with the most excellent Qualities and Endowments; our Wisdom, Holiness, Patience, Peace, Faith, Charity, Humility, &c. The Excellencies of our Souls, which renders them amiable in God's Sight, and eminently fits them for Communion with him in Grace here, and for his Enjoyment in Glory hereafter, are by Virtue of the Holy Scriptures, as is evident from the following Texts. Saith St. Paul, in the Subject we are upon, *From a Child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation.* And, saith the Psalmist, *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the Simple: The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart; the Commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the Mind,* Psal. xix. 7, 8. Whatsoever Graces or Virtues go in the Composition of a Christian, are obtained by the Scriptures, as a Means conducive to that End.

The

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 109

The great Christian Virtue, Faith it self, comes this Way; *Faith cometh by hearing the Word of God*, Rom. x. 17. And, without Doubt, all other Graces are inherited after the same Manner, because the Apostle assures us, that the Gospel of Christ *is the Power of God, for the Salvation of all them that do believe*, Rom. i. 16. (*i. e.*) 'Tis the Means God makes Use of, to convert our Souls, and to produce in us every Grace that is necessary for Glory. Now the Advantages we reap from these Graces, are very great. They interest us in the Promises of the Gospel, and entitle us to every Mercy, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, which Christ Jesus hath purchased, and will bestow upon his chosen and beloved. And so very necessary are these Virtues, to the Comfort and Happiness of our Souls, that we cannot be without them: They are their Food and Nourishment, by which they thrive to Perfection; and without which they will languish and die, to their well Being and Happiness for ever.

What Food, Physick, Exercise, and Rest, are to the Body, to make it thrive, and flourish, and to keep it in Repair, such are Graces to the Soul, to revive and comfort it, and to fill it with Joy unspeakable and glorious. Let the Apostles, Men of sanctify'd Reason, and the best Judges in the Case, tell us, what by their own Experience they know of these Things, and we shall be satisfied that they are very beneficial and advantageous. Saith blessed

## 110 Of Knowing the Scripture.

fed Paul, *Godliness is profitable for all Things; it bath the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come,* 2 Tim. iv. 8. And of Faith he saith, *I live by it*, and that we overcome the World with it. And he assures us that by this Virtue, the Scripture Worthies did Wonders. *They subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtained Promises, stopped the Mouths of Lions, quenched the Violence of Fire, escaped the Edge of the Sword; out of Weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in Fight, turned to Flight the Armies of the Aliens,* Heb. xi. 32, 33, 34. And Peace of Conscience, he tells us, is a Blessing *that passeth all Understanding, it will keep our Hearts and Minds thro' Jesus Christ our Lord,* Phil. iv. 7. And Hope, he saith, is a Helmet; 'tis a Part of our spiritual Armour, and of great Use and Benefit in our Christian Warfare. 'Tis as a Cordial to revive and comfort us, a Staff to support us, a Bridle to restrain us, and a Piece of Armour to defend and save us, 1 Thes. v. 8. And in another Place he calls it *the Anchor of the Soul both sure and stedfast, which entreth into that within the Veil.* 'Tis a Grace that keeps the Soul firm, safe, and stedfast, in the Midst of Trials, Temptations, and Enemies, which surround it in this tempestuous World, Heb. viii. 11. And of Charity he saith, *It suffers long, and is kind, it envieth not, it vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, doth not behave it self unseemly, it thinketh no Evil. It rejoyceth not*  
in



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 111

*in Iniquity, but rejoyceth in the Truth. It beareth all Things, it believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7. And Patience inheriteth the Promises, Rom. ii. 7. To them who by patient Continuance in well doing, seek for Glory and Honour, they shall obtain Immortality and eternal Life. And Humility is the most amiable and beneficial Virtue, it attracts God's Eye, and procures his Presence. Isa. lvii. 15. Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is holy; I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble Spirit: To revive the Spirit of the humble, and to revive the Heart of the contrite ones.* This Virtue is so lovely in God's Sight, that he likes it in whomsoever he sees it. A wicked *Ahab* shall fare the better for it all his Days. God was pleased with the Sight of it in him, and calls the Prophet to behold the lovely Prospect, *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me I will not bring the Evil in his Days; but in his Sons Days will I bring the Evil upon his House, 1 Kings xxi. 29.* If we be humble Christians upon Earth now, we shall be blessed Saints in Heaven hereafter. And God will neither suffer us to mistake our Way in this Life, nor to come short of Glory in the next. Saith the Psalmist, *The meek God will guide in Judgment, and the meek he will teach his Way, Psal. xxv. 9.* And saith our Saviour, *Blessed are the poor.*

## 112 Of Knowing the Scripture.

*poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, Mat. v. 2.* These are some of the Benefits and Advantages that accrue to our Souls by Means of the Holy Scriptures, and must be allowed on all Hands, to be exceeding precious and valuable ; in as much, as they serve to perfect our Beings and Nature, by sanctifying and improving our Faculties, by furnishing us with spiritual Armour to secure our selves, and oppose our Enemies, by interesting us in the Promises of the Gospel, by enabling us to do and suffer the Will of God, by filling us with Joy unspeakable and glorious, by procuring us the Favour of God, and securing our Title to Eternal Life.

(2.) The Holy Scriptures are also very beneficial and advantageous to our outward and bodily State. These Writings are a Divine Revelation, and have a Divine Influence upon the Hearts and Minds of Men, to form them to Virtue, and *make them wise unto Salvation* ; and where-ever they produce these Effects, their Advantages are very great. *Solomon* tells us, that the Wisdom which comes by the Holy Scriptures, hath long Life and Prosperity entailed upon it. *Prov. iii. 16. Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour.* Very well, therefore, by Way of Commendation, might he say in the foregoing Verses, *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding : For the Merchandise of it is better than the Merchandise of Silver ;*  
and

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 113

*and the Gain thereof than fine Gold. She is more precious than Rubies ; and all the Things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. She affords incomparably greater and better Things, than are to be found in this lower World. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace. She is a Tree of Life to all that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that findeth her. This Wisdom procures all needful and desireable Blessings, which appertain either to our Persons or Families, with Respect to the Welfare, Prosperity, or Safety of them : As God declares in Deut. xxviii. 3, 4, 5. Blessed shalt thou be in the City, and blessed shalt thou be in the Field. Blessed shall be the Fruit of thy Body, and the Fruit of thy Ground, and the Fruit of thy Cattel, and the Increase of thy Kine, and the Flocks of thy Sheep. Blessed shalt thou be in thy Basket, and thy Store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.*

And besides, this Wisdom will protect and secure us against the Enticements of Men, and the Allurements of a vain World. 'Twill so fortify us against their Temptations and corrupt Examples, that they shall make no Impression upon us, so as to seduce us to Impurity, Sensuality, and Luxury. 'Twill enable us to preserve the Integrity of our Hearts, the Innocence of our Hands, the Purity of our Souls, and the Temperance and Chastity of

## 114 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

our Bodies, even in the Midst of a defiling *Sodom*. 'Twill assist us to quench all impure Desires, to mortify all brutish Lusts, to subdue inordinate Passions, and to bring into Subjection every Thought to the Obedience of Christ. Yea, 'tis singularly useful to Men, to preserve them from all Intemperance and Excess, which do inflame, corrupt, and distemper their Blood, waste their Estates, consume their Vigour, shorten Life, and accelerate their Damnation. 'Twill keep them from false and profane Swearing, and from the vile and scandalous Trade of Lying, and Slandering, the Disgrace of their Nature, which turns them from rational Men into breathing Devils; and produce Truth, Sincerity, and Integrity in their Souls, and prevail with them, from a Principle of Justice, Humanity, and Charity, to do unto others, what they would others should do unto them, supposing themselves in their Circumstances: And 'twill make them regard Truth in all their Words, and Faithfulness in all their Promises.

*Last of All.* This Wisdom will grow up with our Children, and be useful to them in every Stage of Life. 'Twill keep them humble and dutiful in Youth, and make them sober, discreet, and pious, in their riper and advanced Years. 'Twill assist them wonderfully in the Search of other Knowledge, useful and profitable to Life, and will be as Wings and Feet to carry them on, and make them speedy in the Pursuit of it. 'Twill enable them to  
choose



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 115

choose well and wisely, and to distinguish rightly. 'Twill guard them against Notions repugnant to Christianity ; and teach them to extract the precious and profitable, from the vile and pernicious, and secure them from a vain World, and a vainer Conversation. Yea, 'twill quench the Fear of Men, and excite the Fear of God. 'Twill make them patient and attentive under the Word : 'Twill teach them to profit by it, to be diligent about it, to live up to it, and to prevent Satan from depriving them of the Benefits of it.

(3.) Let such as are skilful in the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures ; who so know them as to love them, to believe them, and order their Conversation by them, admire the wonderful Goodness of God, in vouchsafing to instruct them in the Words of eternal Life, while he is silent to others, and suffers them to sit in Darkness, and in the Region of the Shadow of Death. Yea, how many thousands be there in the professed World, who have the Means of Knowledge, the Holy Scriptures, and all Opportunities and Advantages they can in Reason desire, to acquaint themselves with them, and be profited by them, yet will not hear, nor learn, nor give Attendance ? They have no Hearts to mind the Affairs of their Souls, and immortal Happiness ; they are only solicitous for gratifying their Animal Part : The Stream of their Thoughts, Desires, and Cares, runs into a worldly Channel, devising *what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and where-*

## 116 Of Knowing the Scripture.

*withal they shall be clothed.* And the Reason is, God hath not given them *an Ear to hear, nor a Heart to perceive and obey, unto this Day.* To you, saith Christ, *it is given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them 'tis not given,* Deut. xxix. 4. and Mat. xiii. 11. This distinguishing Favour of God, should tenderly affect your Hearts, and in Admiration of it, you should cry out, What are we, O Lord ! unworthy, sinful Dust and Ashes, that thou art pleased thus to manifest thy self to us, and not unto others ? Wherein, Lord, are we better than others ? Or what Good dost thou behold in us more than in others, to cause thee to prefer us to them ? We all came from the same Original, and are alike guilty and miserable before thee : We have offer'd thee innumerable Provocations, both in Words, Thoughts, and in Actions, with the rest of Mankind. We with them have abused thy Patience, despised thy Goodness, injured thy Justice, and contemned thy Power : Yea, we have rather exceeded than come short of them in Wickedness ; and therefore the least of our Deserts is, to be condemned with them to eternal Darkeness. But O Goodness truly divine ! Thou hast not only saved us from our justly deserved Misery, *and plucked us as a Brand out of the Fire ; but hast found a Ransom for us, thy beloved Son, in whom thou hast chosen us before the Foundation of the World ; that we should be wise, and holy, and without Blame before him in Love,* Eph. i. 4. This  
is

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 117

*is the Lord's Doings, and it should be marvellous in our Eyes.* Oh ! Seeing the Holy God hath been so good to us, and so righteously severe to others ! Seeing he hath made such a Distinction between us and them, so much to our Comfort and Advantage, not for our Merits, but his Goodness Sake, how should we admire the Favour, and bless the Donor. The Benefit is ours, the Work is God's, let us ascribe the Praise and Glory of all to him ; saying, *Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power be unto him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever, Rev. v. 13.*

(2.) Let such as have stood out, and been stubborn to the eleventh Hour, and yet then reclaimed, which is very rare, admire the Patience of God, in waiting so long, and bearing so much ; and his Mercy in saving them at last. Oh ! if his Patience and Mercy were not infinite, you had long since been as *Sodom*, and as *Gomorrhah* ! Now, there are several Considerations that do serve to magnify the Divine Patience and Mercy.

(1.) The wretched Abuse of the Privileges and Advantages of a Christian Descent. The Children of religious Parents may properly be said to be Pupils or Scholars, under the Guardianship of God himself, his Spirit is continually striving with them, and his Word constantly courting their Embraces, both in their Infancy, Minority, and Adult Age : And their Parents, and other ordinary Teachers, do  
concur

## 118 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

concur herein, and as Men or Instruments do their best and utmost, to carry on the Work with Success. Though, 'tis true, all their Labours, Prayers, and Watching, will turn to no Account, except God, who is the chief Master in the School of Christ, doth teach with them ; For *Paul* is nothing, and *Apollos* is nothing ; one doth but plant, the other water, 'tis *God that gives the Increase*, 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6, 7.

(2.) The Multitude of Souls that have been cut off in the Midst of their Iniquities, without the Exercise of much Patience and Mercy, is another Consideration to magnify these Attributes of God to us. The first World, that derided the Preaching and Example of godly *Noah*, and would not hear nor learn Righteousness from him, were quickly swept away by the Flood ; Not one of those rebellious Infidels escaped it. So the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, when they rejected the Lamb of God, and would not believe nor obey him, God's Patience had then done waiting upon them, and his Mercy pleading for them. Their Destruction is decreed, and the Things of their Peace hid from their Eyes ; the Treaty between God and them is ended, and though they might live many Years after this, yet God did not vouchsafe to attempt any Thing further for their Conversion. This was a sorrowful Case, and did sensibly affect our Saviour, as is evident by the Tears he shed over them, when he was riding into *Jerusalem* in Triumph.

Saith



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 119

Saith the Evangelist, *Luke xix. 41, 42. And when he was come near, he beheld the City and wept over it: Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy Day the Things which belong unto thy Peace, but now they are hid from thine Eyes.* So *Herod*, no sooner doth his Pride lift him up, and he blasphemeth; but he is devoured of Worms. God had not Patience to stay to reckon with him 'till a natural Death should put a Period to his sinful Life.

(3.) The Commands of God to be early and speedy in fulfilling the Law of our Duty; and his Threats denounced upon the incorrigible and disobedient, is another Consideration to magnify the Exercise of these Perfections towards you. In *Eccles. xii. 1.* God saith, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth; while the evil Days come not, and the Tears draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.* So *Isaiab lv. 6.* *Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.* And God threatens that his Spirit shall not always strive with Men. Which Places of Scripture do plainly intimate, that we cannot begin too early, we may stand out too late; and by repeated Provocations grieve the Holy Spirit to a Departure, and to leave us hardened, impenitent, and unrighteous for ever.

And *Lastly*, Think with your selves what a mighty Struggle there has been in the Court of Heaven, between Justice and Mercy, for  
and

See. 2.

## 120 *Of Knowing the Scripture.*

and against you, throughout your rebellious Course. How often hath the Justice of God been exasperated against you, to a high Degree, and lifted up her Hand in a Readiness to strike, and dispatch you for ever. When the Divine Mercy, God's tender Attribute, hath as often interposed and prevented the terrible Effects thereof. If this be your Case, 'tis a rare one : And from the foregoing Considerations, we may justly fear, there are but few such Instances in the whole World. Surely the Rarity of the Thing, doth sensibly affect your Souls with Thankfulness and Admiration towards God the Author thereof. And how can it otherwise choose, when you consider what once you were ; that you wasted your Youth, and consumed your Minority in Idleness and Vanity ; that you squandered away the Flower and the best of your Time and Strength in the Drudgery of Sin, and the Servitude of Satan : Who would not open your Ears to Discipline, nor *hear the Voice of the Charmer*, though *charming never so wisely*, Psal. lviii. 5. but were deaf to the Voice of God's Word, unmelted by the Motions of his Spirit, unaffected by the Counsel and Example of your Parents ; and unperswaded by the Instructions of your Guides, and obstinately persisting in your ungodly Courses, in spite of all Means and Methods for your Recovery.

Admire, highly admire, the Patience and Mercy of God towards you in this Space of Time, and under such mighty Provocations,  
which

Of Knowing the Scripture. 121

which would have tired all the Creature Patience and Clemency in the World. Consider not only the wilful Sins you then committed, and persisted in, but also the Aversion of your Souls to a Reformation; and how unsavory and tasteless the Holy Scriptures, *the Wisdom that is from above*, was to you; and, what Excuses you framed, from carnal Reason, to neglect and delay your Duties, and conceal your dislike of them; and what Shifts (to your Shame let it be spoken) you used, to be out of the Hearing of them; perhaps, because you either thought them tedious and burdensome, or else to prevent their Influence? Now, after so many Repulses, Indignities and Denials you have offered the Spirit of God, his Word, and Servants; yea, after a Life spent *in the Works of Darkness*, is it not truly wonderful, that his Patience should yet wait upon you; and that at last, even when, in the Judgment of your own Minds, you deserved to be rejected, and to be stripp'd of all your spiritual Privileges, and as stubborn and contumacious, to be turned out of the School of Christ, and turned into Hell, that then his Mercy and Grace should prevent, and reform you, should *bring you to the Obedience of the Just*, and make you wise, and willing to learn Righteousness. Surely it might be said of you, what is said of Lot's miraculous Rescue from the Flames of Sodom, *That while he lingered, the Lord being merciful unto him*, took him by the Hand,

R

and

## 122 Of Knowing the Scripture.

and brought him forth, and set him without the City, Gen. xix. 16. *Rejoice in the Lord. And again, I say, rejoice.*

(*Lastly,*) Let such as have reap'd the Benefit of a religious Education, and are arrived to the practical Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, under the Care and Tuition of dear Parents; consider their Obligations to them, and labour to requite them; for 'tis owing to their Love, Diligence, and Conduct, under God, that you are what you are; that you have been restrain'd from Intemperance and Vice, in your Youth, that the Contagion which too commonly prevails, and spreads in this Stage of Life, and indangers a general Infection, through the Influence of bad Company, pernicious Customs, and the Carelessness, and faulty Indulgence of slothful Parents, hath not reach'd and tainted you: That when others have drunk *Iniquity like Water, and committed Sin with Greediness and Pleasure*, and by that means contracted evil Habits, insuperable to Nature, you have withstood them; and, by the Grace of God, have preserved your Integrity and Uprightness, *in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation.*

In a Word, to your religious Education, and God's Blessing, is owing all the Good that's in you, and done by you. This Way the Principles of Religion, and Grace, are planted, and do thrive; and this Way you gradually ripen, and grow up in all Christian Virtues,



## Of Knowing the Scripture. 123

Virtues, and Praise-worthy Qualities, and are enabled to resist Satan, to mortify Corruption, to bridle Lusts, to govern Passion, to vanquish Temptations, to overcome the World, and to will and to do, according to God's good Pleasure. Now you requite your aged Parents, when you love, honour, and in case of Necessity, succour them. This is all you can do, and all they require. Now you honour your Parents, and God with them, and express to Satisfaction your Love to them, when your Behaviour is dutiful and respectful towards them, and is every way consistent with the Obligations you lie under; and when you improve their Instructions, and answer the End of them.

This Love (consider) doth not consist in fine Words, and civil Compliments, but in real Deeds; for Words and Compliments by themselves are but a Picture of Love, a counterfeit Copy, or a mere Carcase without a Soul. Such therefore as are liberal in promising, but slow in performing; that will speak fairly, but act undutifully; that with their *Mouths do shew much Love, but their Hearts go after their detestable Things*, do not sincerely love, and honour their Parents, they only dissemble and flatter them. The Practice of such unwise and unhappy Children, resembles that which the Prophet complains of, *They come unto thee as thy People cometh; they hear thy Words but will not do them*, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. *Then*

## 124 Of Knowing the Scripture.

*art near in their Mouth, but far from their Reins, Jer. xii. 2. To thy Face they compliment thee, they give thee good Words, and fair and solemn Promises, which to Human Apprehension are sincere, and the Fruit of an upright Heart ; but behind thy Back they contradict all, by a sinful and disobedient Life : They do not practise in their Lives what they profess and promise with their Mouths : And hence do shew, as Effects discover their Causes, that their Love to God is insincere and defective, and that they are not stedfast in his Covenant. They are our Saviour's Words, John xiv. 23. If any Man love me, he will keep my Word. So likewise if your Love to your dear Parents be unfeigned, 'twill be evident in your Behaviour and Practice ; 'twill be seen in your Care to please them, and in diligently avoiding every Thing that tends to displease and anger them ; 'twill appear in ordering your Conversation agreeably to the Education you have had of them, and in regarding their Counsel, so as to practise it ; and their Example, so as to follow and imitate it : That with them you may be wise and virtuous, and out of a good Conversation shew your Works with Meekness, James iii. 13. And with them may come to the Unity of the Faith, and grow up in the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man ; that henceforth you be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine,*  
by

## Of Knowing the Scripture. 125

*by the Slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But may grow up in him in all Things, which is the Head, even Christ, Eph. iv. 13, 14.* If these Things be in you, then may you comfort your Souls with these, or such like Considerations ; That by the Grace of God you have husbanded your Time well, you have improved your Opportunities to the Purpose, you have answered the End of a religious Education, and have amply requited your loving Parents, for all their Care, Expence, and Kindness towards you : For what they chiefly proposed to themselves hereby, was your spiritual Advantage, that you might be wise and holy. Thus, through Mercy, having in you their main Expectation answered, they bless God, commend and rejoyce in you, and rest in Peace.

Persevere, Little Children, in so laudable a Course, and magnify and manifest the Grace of God within you, by a suitable Life without you. *Be Ensamples to others, in Word, in Conversation, in Sincerity, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, and in Purity, 1 Tim. iv. 12.* Let your Words and Actions manifest your Zeal for God, and your Wisdom, Love, Humility, Temperance, Moderation, and Piety, convince Men that you are in Reality within, what you profess without. Let your Parents Virtues live in you, be valued by you, shine and flourish with you ; and use the same holy  
Zeal

## 126 Of Knowing the Scripture.

Zeal and Diligence they did, to transmit them to your Issue; they being the best Legacy and Inheritance you possibly can bequeath them, or can desire to see them in the Possession of: For they will keep them in Favour with God, secure their main End, their Interest in Christ, and Title to Eternal Life, and sanctify all their temporal Mercies, and make them wear well, and last long, and render their Enjoyment exceeding comfortable. Indeed, this holy Industry to produce Grace in your Children, is not only commanded, but is also the natural Product of the Grace of God in your selves, that sweetly and powerfully leads you to it.

God testifies of faithful *Abraham*, saying, *I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment*, Gen. xviii. 19. Believing Parents have the same Motives and Inclinations, and are under the same Concernments with the Father of the Faithful, to train up their Children and Families for God; to do their utmost, by Precept, Example, and Prayer, to inform their Minds, and to reform their Hearts and Manners; to make them wise and holy, that they may persevere in the Ways of the Lord, *and do Justice, and love Mercy, and walk humbly with their God*. Thus by the Divine Blessing, when Parents are faithful and successful in teaching, and Children are willing and ready to learn, and diligent to improve



prove and grow up in the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and all Christian Virtues, they are then wise for themselves, wise towards God, wise for Eternity, and wise unto Salvation: And they may comfort themselves with this, that the infinite and blessed God will never suffer such wise and holy Ones to see Corruption. He will guide them by his Counsel here, and afterwards receive them to Glory.

**FINIS.**



\*\*\*\*\*

**P**ROPOSALS for printing a Second Edition of the Reverend and Learned Dr. *Thomas Manton's* Sermons on the cxixth Psalm. To which will be prefix'd, Some Account of his Life and Character.

I. They will contain at least three hundred Sheets, in *Folio*.

II. The Price to Subscribers will be one Pound eight Shillings in Quires; half a Guinea to be paid down, and the Remainder on Delivery of the Book.

III. He who subscribes for six to have a seventh gratis, which reduces the Price to one Pound four Shillings; and which being under a Penny a Sheet, must be allow'd to be very reasonable.

IV. The Book shall be printed, and ready to deliver to the Subscribers on or before *Midsummer* Day next.

Subscriptions are taken in by *R. Ford*, in the *Poultry*.

10 JA 66

\*\*\*\*\*

*Now in the Press, and will speedily be publish'd,*

**P**Ractical Discourses on the principal Representations of the *Messiah* throughout the Old Testament. By the Reverend Mr. *William Harris*. Printed for *R. Ford*.

